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STORIES
FROM THE
OPERAS

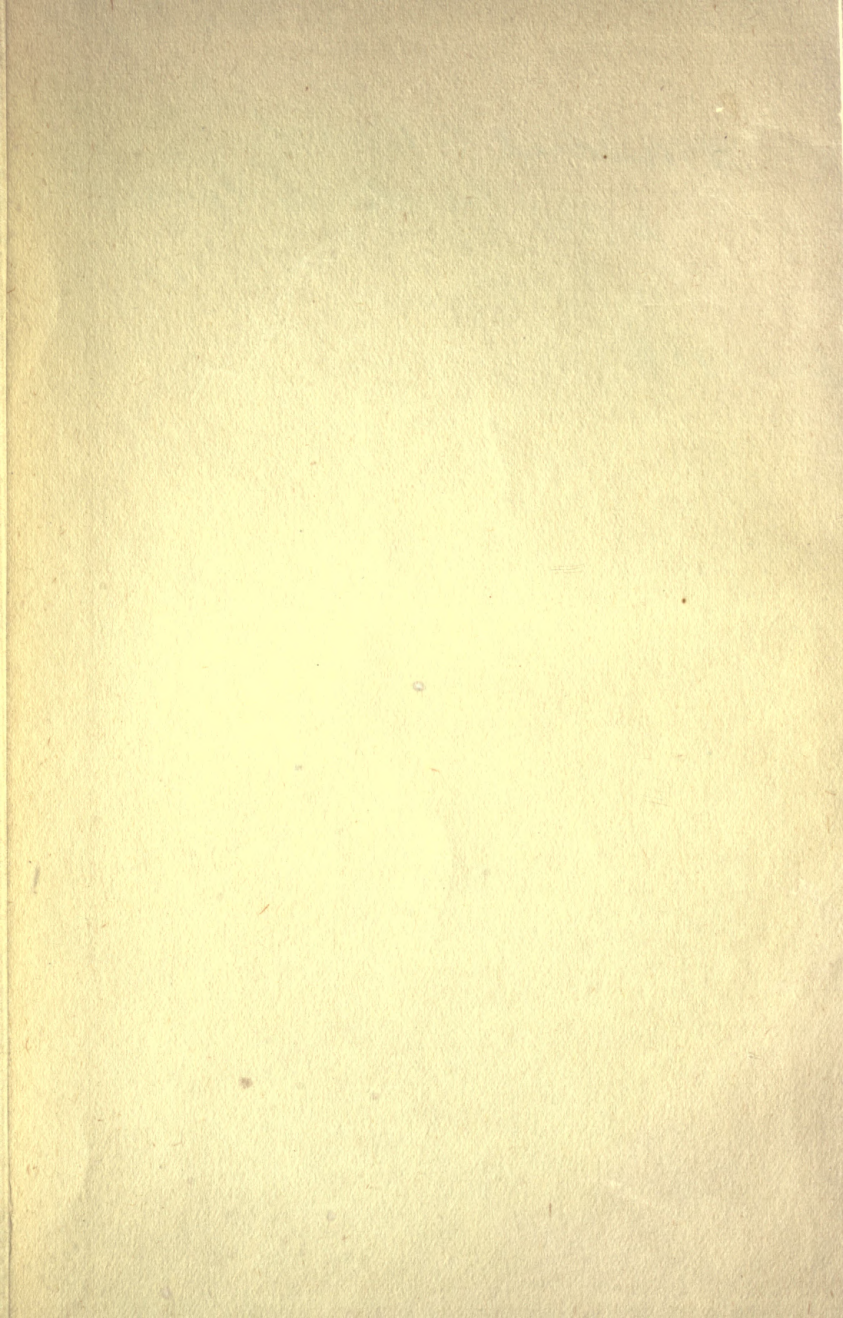
GLADYS
DAVIDSON





Mildred L. Brock
with Mother's love

Dec 1916



STORIES FROM THE OPERAS

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STORIES FROM THE OPERAS

FOURTH EDITION



WAGNER

STORIES FROM THE OPERAS

WITH SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THE
COMPOSERS

BY
GLADYS DAVIDSON



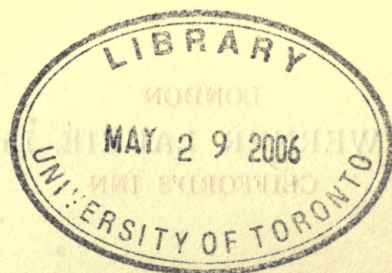
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STORIES FROM THE OPERA

WITH SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THE
COMPOSERS

GLADYS DAVIDSON



DEDICATED
BY KIND PERMISSION
TO THE
COUNTESS DE GREY
WHO HAS DONE SO MUCH
FOR GRAND OPERA
IN ENGLAND

PREFACE

THE twenty stories contained in this volume are taken from amongst the most popular Grand Operas constantly performed at Covent Garden and Drury Lane Opera Houses; the object being to present all the incidents of each *libretto* in the clear, readable form of a short story. This, it is hoped, may fill a much-felt want, since many, even truly musical people, have frequently only very vague ideas of the actual *stories* contained in their favourite operas.

I have to express my best thanks to the following publishing firms for the kind permission they have accorded me to use the stories of the various *libretti*, most of which are still copyright :—

Messrs NOVELLO & CO., LTD., 1 Berners Street, W.

(For *Tannhäuser*, *The Flying Dutchman*, and *Rigoletto*).

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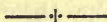
(For *Mignon*).

I also wish to tender thanks to the Managers of Covent Garden and Drury Lane Opera Houses, and of the Moody-Manners Opera Company, for information courteously given regarding *libretti*.

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STORIES FROM THE OPERAS



LOHENGRIN

DURING the early years of the tenth century, Henry the Fowler, King of Germany, gained great renown in all the countries of Europe, and by means of his courage and skill in warfare, he had brought many cities and large tracts of land beneath his sway.

Amongst these countries was Brabant, over which he ruled as Liege Lord ; and coming one day to Antwerp, the chief city of this fair land, to gather his faithful vassals together to help him to fight against the wild Hungarians, who had invaded his realms, he found them in a troubled state, since they were without a ruler, and their chiefs were quarrelling amongst each other.

Some years ago, the brave Duke of Brabant had died and left his two children in the charge of his nearest kinsman, Count Frederick of Telramund, who promised to love and guard them until they were old enough to rule the Dukedom for themselves. The boy, Gottfried, and his sister, Elsa, loved

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one another so dearly that they could not bear to be parted; but, happy though they were in each other's love, a great trouble fell upon them.

As the years went on, Frederick of Telramund came under the evil influence of a princess of another powerful family of Brabant, rivals for the throne with the late Duke. This Princess, whose name was Ortrud, was very unscrupulous, and a dealer in magic, and she had learnt the arts of sorcery so well that it was her delight to change people into the forms of animals, and to work all the mischief she could. She hated Elsa, who had now grown up to be a sweet and beautiful maiden, and, determined to bring trouble upon her, she persuaded Telramund, with cunning words, that she herself was the rightful ruler of Brabant, and that if he would marry her they would rule the country together.

Now, Telramund wished to marry Elsa, whose hand had been promised him by her father; but the pure and lovely Elsa only felt scorn for him, knowing him to be neither good nor worthy of her love. Then Ortrud laid a wicked plot, by means of which she hoped to gain her ends.

One day, when Elsa and Gottfried had gone into the forest to walk and talk together according to their usual custom, Ortrud, by her spells, caused them to wander apart from each other, and then, by further magic, she transformed Gottfried into a bird. Elsa

wandered about for some time, searching for her brother, but at last she returned to the palace, sad and alone. Then the wicked Ortrud came forward and declared that she had seen Elsa drown her brother in the moat of a ruined castle in the forest, and she soon persuaded Telramund that the maiden had indeed murdered the young Gottfried. So Telramund renounced the hand of Elsa, and married Ortrud instead ; and very soon afterwards he claimed the throne of Brabant.

The poor Princess Elsa was now very unhappy, full of grief for the loss of the brother she had loved so well, and in fear for her own safety ; but one day she was comforted by a vivid and beautiful dream as she was praying to Heaven for help. In her dream she saw a splendid Knight clad in silver armour, who looked upon her with eyes of love, and spoke such cheering words of hope that she no longer felt alone and helpless. When she awoke, she spoke of the noble Champion whom she now believed would come to protect her ; but Telramund and Ortrud laughed with scorn, and declared this mysterious lover was but the partner in her evil deed, with whom she wished to share the throne.

It was just at this time that Henry the Fowler, Liege Lord of Brabant, came to Antwerp to call for aid from his vassals ; and hearing of the strife that was going on, he gathered the nobles together on the banks of the river Scheldt, and declared

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he would give judgment in the matter that very day.

When all the people were assembled on the riverside, Frederick of Telramund came forward and accused the Princess Elsa of having murdered her brother in order to win the throne for herself; and then the King called upon Elsa to defend the charge made against her.

When the royal maiden appeared with her ladies, pale and sad, she looked so fair and pure that all the people felt her to be innocent; and as they gazed upon her, almost with awe, she presently stood forth and sang a beautiful song, describing the noble Knight she had seen in her dream, whom she felt would be her Champion. These were the words she sang:

"I saw in splendour shining, a Knight of glorious
mien,
On me his eyes inclining with tranquil gaze serene ;
A horn of gold around him, he leant upon his sword,
Thus when I erst espied him 'mid clouds of light he
soared.
His words so low and tender brought life renewed to
me ;
My guardian, my defender, thou shalt my Champion
be !"

When the song came to an end, the King was so struck with Elsa's angelic look that he declared so evil a deed could never have been done by one whom Heaven seemed to protect.

On hearing this, Telramund grew angry,

and announcing that he had spoken the truth, he challenged any man who doubted his word to fight with him. The King now determined that Elsa's innocence or guilt should thus be proved by single combat, and calling upon her to name a champion who should fight for her, he said that Heaven alone should decide between them. If *her* Champion gained the victory, she should be declared innocent, but if Count Telramund overcame, they would know that she was guilty.

Elsa agreed to this, and said that her Champion should be the noble Knight of her dream; and then the King's herald blew a long, loud blast upon his trumpet, and cried out: "Who will do battle for Elsa of Brabant?"

There was a long, breathless pause, but no one answered the call. Again the herald called out: "Who will do battle for Elsa of Brabant?" Then Elsa stretched out her arms and prayed Heaven to send her the Champion she sought; and this time the call was answered.

A great shout arose from the people, and all eyes were turned towards the river; for there they saw, drawn by a beautiful white swan, a skiff approaching, in which stood a splendid Knight of glorious mien. He was clad entirely in dazzling silver armour, with a shining helmet upon his head, a golden horn at his side, and a flashing sword girt around his waist; and the beauty of his face

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and form, and the truth and purity that shone in his eyes, were so wondrous that every one gazed upon him with speechless wonder.

When the skiff drew near to the shore, the Knight sprang lightly to the bank, but facing the river once again, he uttered a few words of thanks and farewell to the swan that had brought him thither :

“I give thee thanks, my faithful swan !
Turn thee again and breast the tide,
Return unto that land of dawn
Where joyous we did long abide.
Well thy appointed task is done ;
Farewell, my trusty swan !”

The swan then sailed away with the skiff in a stately manner, and when it had vanished out of sight, the Knight turned towards the amazed company on the shore.

As Elsa saw him approaching towards her she was filled with joy, for she knew him at once to be the radiant Knight of her dream, and when he declared that he had come to fight for her cause, she rapturously accepted him as her Champion, promising her hand as his reward should he gain the victory. The Knight of the Swan next begged of her to promise that she would never ask him to tell her his race and name, or whence he came, and Elsa already loved him so dearly that she gladly gave this promise.

Then the stranger drew his sword, and the fight began, and after a sharp conflict

he felled Telramund to the ground, but generously spared his life. Ortrud shrieked with rage and dismay, but the rest of the company uttered loud shouts of joy.

The King now declared that since Heaven had given the victory to Elsa's Champion, the royal maiden's innocence was proved, and he commanded the people of Brabant to obey Elsa and her Knight as their rulers.

So Telramund and Ortrud were stripped of all their power, honours, and riches; and disgraced, poor, and wretched, they were driven from the palace, to wander in the streets as outcasts.

They could not, however, keep away from the scenes of their former splendour, and on the night before Elsa's marriage with the Knight of the Swan, they came, clad in their coarse garments, and crouched outside the walls of the palace. The sounds of revelry that came from within made them feel more wretched still, and Telramund began to reproach Ortrud bitterly for the trouble she had brought on them both by her wicked spells and false words.

But Ortrud answered: "List to me, and we may yet overcome Elsa and her Champion, and win back our power! Yonder Knight of the Swan bids the maiden never to ask his name and home. And why? Because if he becomes known he must return whence he came. Let us then put doubt in Elsa's heart by telling her he gained this victory by sorcery, and thus entice her to drag from

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him his secret. He is certainly helped by sorcery, and I have learnt by my own arts that if but one drop of blood be spilt of him to whom magic help is lent all his powers will vanish. Do thou, then, seek to wound this Knight, and if I can also entice Elsa to ask his name and race, all shall yet be well with us."

Frederick of Telramund eagerly agreed to Ortrud's evil plans, and whilst they were thus talking together, Elsa herself, clad in flowing white garments, appeared on the balcony above, singing a glad song of thankfulness for the joy that was in her heart. Whilst she sang, Telramund crept quietly away, and when the sweet song came to an end, Ortrud came forth from her hiding-place, and called out: "Elsa!"

The royal maiden, who had thought herself quite alone, was surprised at hearing her name thus spoken, and when she recognised Ortrud in the square below, she was filled with pity at seeing her in such a sad plight. So when the wily Ortrud next began to relate a false story, declaring that she and her husband were under an evil spell when they accused her of having murdered her brother, and that they were now full of remorse and misery, Elsa's kind heart was touched, and presently she came down into the square and took Ortrud back into the palace with her, promising that next morning she would intercede for the two outcasts with her Champion Knight.

On the morrow, all in the palace were full of excitement and rejoicing, for this was Elsa's wedding day, and great preparations had been made to celebrate it in fitting style. Elsa was delighted at the prospect of happiness before her, but doubt of her brave Champion was already springing up in her heart, planted there by Ortrud. A fear that she would lose her lover began to fill her with dread, for her cunning enemy did not fail to point out that one to whom magic aid was lent might at any moment vanish from her sight.

When the bridal procession to the Minster was formed, Ortrud, clad once more in gorgeous garments, was amongst the train of ladies; but as they drew near to the church, her haughty spirit could no longer bear that Elsa should go before her, and angrily she commanded the bride to stand back, declaring that she herself should lead, since she was the rightful ruler of Brabant. Elsa stopped, full of surprise as she remembered how humble Ortrud had been the night before, and the angry sorceress now challenged her to name her Champion Knight, and to say from whence he obtained his mystic power and strength.

In the midst of this confusion, the King and his lords appeared on the scene with the bridegroom, and when the Knight of the Swan saw Elsa in conversation with the wicked Ortrud, he begged her not to be led to doubt him. As he spoke to her,

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Frederick of Telramund sprang out from a hiding-place close at hand, and, before all the bridal party, accused Elsa's Champion of having gained the victory over him by sorcery and evil spells, and called upon him to declare his name and place of abode if he would be regarded as a true knight.

But the Knight of the Swan still refused to tell his secret, declaring that Elsa alone could compel him to speak; and he added that the King and princes must be satisfied with having seen his deed of valour, and how Heaven had shown favour to him. The King and nobles now declared they were satisfied for him to remain unknown, and that they would always honour and stand by him for the deed he had done.

Having failed with this shaft, Telramund crept round to Elsa, and whispered to her the suggestion that she should allow him to wound her lover slightly, since, if but one drop of his blood could be spilled, he would lose his strange power and remain for ever at her side; and he added that that very night he would be near at hand to do the deed. But the Knight of the Swan came and drew Elsa quickly away, begging her to have no further doubt of him, and Elsa, gladly placing her hand in his, entered the Minster with him, and the bridal procession followed.

When the wedding ceremony was over, great revels were held in the palace, and ere these came to an end, Elsa and her

husband were led to their bridal chamber by a splendid company of knights and ladies, who sang to them the following sweet marriage song :

“ Faithful and true we lead ye forth,
Where love triumphant shall crown ye with joy !
Star of renown, flow’r of the earth,
Blest be ye both, far from all life’s annoy.
Champion victorious, go thou before !
Maid, bright and glorious, go thou before !
Mirth’s noisy revel ye have forsaken,
Tender delights for you now awaken !
Fragrant abode enshrine ye in bliss,
Splendour and state in joy ye dismiss,
Faithful and true, we lead ye forth ! ”

When at last they were left alone, the Knight of the Swan clasped his beautiful wife in his arms, and the two rejoiced together in their happy love. But, joyous though she was, the seeds of doubt and fear in Elsa’s heart, planted there by Ortrud, were growing fast, and when these first blissful moments were past, she begged her husband to reveal to her his secret, declaring that she would guard it well.

The Knight of the Swan begged her not to ask him, since all their happiness must thus come to an end, and he would be obliged to leave her ; but Elsa declared that he was bound by a magic spell, and entreated him to tell her his secret, since she could not trust in him nor be sure that he would remain at her side.

Sorrowfully her husband again implored

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her not to question him, but Elsa, now torn with the fear of losing her beloved one, cried out wildly:

“What magic can I borrow
To bind thy heart to me?
A spell is cast around thee,
By magic thou art here;
In vain thou wouldst assure me.
Declare thy race and name!”

At this moment, Telramund, with four of his companions, broke into the room with drawn swords, intending to kill, or, at least, to wound the stranger Knight; but Elsa, quick to see the danger, handed her husband his sword, and with one blow of it, he felled Telramund to the ground, dead.

The noise of the scuffle soon brought the lords and ladies of the Court into the chamber, and the Knight of the Swan put the fainting Elsa into the charge of her maidens, declaring sadly that all their joy must now come to an end, for since she had demanded his name and home, he must tell her, and his secret once known, he was compelled to depart.

So, as soon as daylight came, and the sun rose in the sky, the King, with Elsa and her husband and the nobles of Brabant, gathered together once more on the banks of the Scheldt. The nobles first of all gave their promise to Henry the Fowler to fight for him as faithful vassals against the Hungarians; and then the Knight of

the Swan stepped forward to make himself known to them, declaring that since Elsa had asked to know his secret, he could no longer keep it from her.

He announced that he was a knight of the Holy Grail, and that so long as he remained unknown, he had wonderful powers of strength and might, and could overcome all evil; but once he became known to man he was compelled to depart and return to the Grail that sent him, for its Champion Knight must be guarded from all doubtings. He thus described the sacred relic which he and other pure and stainless knights served so faithfully :

"In distant land, by ways remote and hidden,
There stands a burg that men call Montsalvat ;
It holds a shrine, to the profane forbidden :
More precious there is nought on earth than that :
And thron'd in light it holds a Cup immortal,
That whoso sees from earthly sin is cleansed ;
'Twas borne by angels thro' the Heav'nly portal—
Its coming hath a holy reign commenc'd.
Once ev'ry year a dove from Heaven descendeth,
To strengthen it anew for works of grace ;
'Tis called the Grail ! . . ."

As the people remained lost in astonishment at this wondrous tale, the Knight of the Swan added :

"Now mark, craft or disguise my soul disdaineth,
The Grail sent me to right yon lady's name ;
My father, Percival, gloriously reigneth,
His Knight am I, and Lohengrin my name !"

As he spoke these words, a cry arose from

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the people: "The swan! The swan! Behold it comes!"

All eyes were turned towards the river; and there, in the distance, the skiff in which the Champion Knight had arrived was seen once more approaching, drawn by the beautiful swan. All this time Elsa had sat silent, pale and sad; but now she sprang up with a cry of grief, and clung to her husband with tears and entreaties.

But Lohengrin gently unwound her clinging arms, and sadly said:

"Too long I stay—I must obey the Grail!

Oh, Elsa, think what joys thy doubts have ended!

Couldst thou not trust in me for one short year?

Then thy dear brother, whom the Grail defended,

In life and honour thou hadst welcom'd here.

If he returns, when our sweet ties are broken,

This horn, this sword, and ring give him in token;

This horn succour on battle-field shall send him,

And with this sword he'll conquer ev'ry foe;

This ring shall mind him who did most befriend him—

Of me who saved thee from the depths of woe!"

He then embraced her tenderly, and bade her a gentle farewell. But as he moved towards the river-bank, Ortrud pressed forward and declared that the swan was in reality young Gottfried, the heir of Brabant, whom she had thus transformed by her magic; and she added triumphantly to Elsa that if she could have kept her Champion Knight by her side for one year, her brother would have been restored again.

But Lohengrin heard these words, though

they were not intended to reach him, and sinking on his knees, he prayed for power to overcome Ortrud's magic. His prayer was graciously answered; for as the people gazed in wonder, the fair white Dove of the Holy Grail flew softly down and hovered over the skiff, whilst Lohengrin quickly loosened the golden chain that bound the swan. Instantly, the swan sank into the water, and presently there arose in its place the young prince, Gottfried, Elsa's brother.

Lohengrin led the fair youth forward, declaring him to be the rightful ruler of Brabant; and then, as the nobles were receiving Gottfried with surprise and delight, the stranger Knight stepped lightly into the skiff, and the white Dove, seizing the chain, began to draw it along.

Elsa, who had clasped Gottfried in her arms with great joy, now turned towards the river, and seeing Lohengrin standing up in the departing skiff signing a last sad farewell to her, she uttered a cry of grief and despair, and sank senseless to the ground.

Gottfried knelt in dismay beside her; and at that moment the Champion Knight of the Holy Grail vanished out of sight.

TANNHÄUSER

IN the fair land of Thuringia there once dwelt a handsome and noble knight, named Henry of Tannhäuser, who was famed for his wonderful gift of song.

In a country where music was the delight of high and low, and where minstrelsy and knighthood went hand in hand, Tannhäuser was the sweetest minstrel of all; and when contests of song were held, it was he who most frequently carried off the wreath of victory. Nor were his brother-minstrels jealous of his power, for they loved him dearly, and gladly yielded him the palm.

Now, the Landgrave, or ruling Prince of Thuringia, had a beautiful niece, the young Princess Elisabeth, whose gracious custom it was to bestow the prizes won at the Tournaments of Song; and, surrounded by her Court of fair maidens, she would listen with delight to the joyous strains of the minstrels.

But when Tannhäuser sounded his harp with the soft and tender touch that was his gift, and the notes of his wondrous sweet voice rang forth, the heart of the royal

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maiden was thrilled through and through, and she grew to love the Minstrel Knight with her whole being. And Henry of Tannhäuser trembled when her fair hands placed the wreath upon his brow; for he also loved, and Elisabeth of Thuringia was the queen of his heart.

But, strange to say, so far from being made happy by his love, Tannhäuser gradually became very wretched indeed, for he grew discontented and weary of his life. Whether it was that he fancied Elisabeth did not return his love, and that the royal maid would not be permitted to wed a humble knight; or whether an evil spirit tempted him, none can say. But day by day he grew more and more restless and heavy of heart—the joys, duties, and interests of earth no longer satisfying him—and he longed for a life of everlasting pleasure and delight, free from pain and trouble.

Now, in Thuringia, there was a mountain called the Hörselberg, or Hill of Venus, within which the heathen goddess of Love and Beauty dwelt with her Court, holding everlasting revels, and seeking to destroy the souls of erring men who fell into her toils; and in this evil, though enticing place, Tannhäuser (either despairing or woefully tempted) at last sought refuge from the griefs and disappointments of earth.

He vanished so suddenly and entirely that none knew where he had gone; and though his friends and companions sought

him long and lovingly, they could not find him.

And the Princess Elisabeth was so full of grief at his loss that she hid herself away in her own chamber to weep in secret; and though the minstrel knights still continued to hold their contests, she no longer graced the *fêtes* with her presence, and refused to give away the awards.

In the meantime, Tannhäuser was living a life of soft ease and voluptuous delight in the enthralling Court of Venus; and the beautiful goddess hoped that her loveliness and tender caresses were satisfying the wild longings of the handsome minstrel, whose soul she wished to destroy.

And for a time, indeed, the young man felt that he had at last found the peace and happiness he vainly sought; and the constant indulgence of his senses deadened his conscience, and made him forget that duty, labour, striving, and suffering are the only true means by which a man can attain to his highest level.

Thus, a year passed swiftly by in this abode of monotonous joys and delights, where no count was kept of days and seasons; and then, at last, a passing return of his better nature came over Tannhäuser, and he awoke, as if from a trance, to the knowledge that a life of selfish pleasure cannot satisfy the longings of a noble nature.

He was kneeling, at the time, beside the fair goddess, as she reclined on a couch

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within the glittering cave where she held her Court, and on every side were the sights and sounds that had enthralled him so long. A wide shining lake stretched out into the distance, and in its rippling blue waters graceful Naiads were disporting themselves, whilst Sirens of wondrous beauty reclined on the mossy banks, their sweet, silvery voices filling the air with enticing songs.

Tender lovers, wrapped in ecstasy, were reclining here and there, and in the centre of the cave a number of dainty Nymphs were constantly dancing, joined ever and anon by a train of wild Bacchantes, who brought a whirl of tumult into their movements, exciting all to a perfect frenzy of joy.

The sounds of music never ceased for a moment: first low and tender, thrilling the heart, and then so merry and joyous that none could refrain from dancing. And over the whole dazzling scene a pall of soft, rosy light was spread, gathering into a mist of billowy clouds in the distance.

Fairest of the fair, and Queen of all this Love and Beauty, Venus sat, enthroned for ever; and as Tannhäuser knelt at the feet of the goddess, with his head sunk upon her knee, he felt for the moment that the world was indeed well lost.

Then, suddenly, with this passing thought of the earth he had left, the Minstrel Knight awakened from his dream of bliss, and he seemed to hear the silvery chime of bells from the world outside, bringing back to his

remembrance the thought of things now lost to him: the radiant sunshine of day, the starry splendour of night, the renewing life and sweet verdure of spring, the nightingale's song of hope and promise, the delight of joy after sorrow, of light after darkness, that only mortals know.

In a flash he saw what an evil choice he had made, how cloying were the selfish delights that now held him captive; and weary of such monotonous joys, he longed to be in the world once more with its mingled joys and pains, understanding now that to strive with evil and conquer was a true heart's highest aim.

The deceptive veil of glamour was now torn from his eyes, and full of remorse for the time he had already wasted, he implored the beautiful goddess for freedom to return to earth.

But Venus was angry when she heard his request, reproaching him with ingratitude, since she had found him despairing, and brought him comfort; and she begged him to touch his harp once more, and love her still, that all her delights might be his for ever.

Tannhäuser declared he would evermore sing her praises, but now determined to be set free from her enslaving toils, he again begged her to send him back into the world, saying:

"'Twas joy alone, a longing thirst for pleasure,
That fill'd my heart, and darkened my desire:

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And thou, whose bounty gods alone can measure,
Gav'st me, poor mortal, all its wealth to know.
But while my sense thou hast enchanted,
By thy great love my heart is daunted :
A god alone can dwell in joy,
To mortals frail, its blisses cloy.
I would be swayed by pain and pleasure
In Nature's sweet, alternate measure :
I must away from thee, or die !”

Once more Venus poured forth her anger
upon him, declaring that he slighted her love,
since the charms he vaunted so soon wearied
him ; but the Minstrel Knight replied :

“ While I have life, alone my harp shall praise thee,
No meaner theme shall e'er my song inspire :
And yet, for earth, for earth I'm yearning !
’Tis freedom I must win, or die.
For freedom I can all defy,
To strife or glory forth I go,
Come life or death, come joy or woe.
No more in bondage will I sigh !
Oh queen, beloved goddess, let me fly !”

Then, when Venus saw that the cloying
delights she had to offer could no longer
hold the awakened soul of Tannhäuser, she
at last granted his request, and she angrily
bade him go back to the cold earth once
more, declaring that he would but meet with
scorn and disappointment, and be glad to
return to her sweet joys again. But the
Minstrel Knight said that he could never
return to her, since repentance and his hope
of Heaven would now fill all his days ; and

with these words he bade an everlasting farewell to the lovely enchantress.

And then the dazzling Court of Venus suddenly vanished from sight; and when Tannhäuser next opened his eyes, he found himself in a beautiful valley, between the forest-girt Hørselberg and the royal castle.

Overhead, the radiant sun was shining brightly in a cloudless sky, and on the mountain side a flock of sheep were feeding; whilst from a rocky eminence above, a joyous young shepherd piped a merry lay. The fresh green grass was spangled with early flowers, and the birds were singing in the budding trees; for it was spring-time, and all the world seemed full of praise and joy.

Overcome with gratitude, Tannhäuser sank upon his knees to return thanks to Heaven for his release from selfish pleasures; and humbly he resolved to lead a new life of repentance and devotion.

Whilst he thus knelt in prayer, a band of pilgrims on their way to Rome came by, and wound along the mountain path, singing a hymn of confession and repentance; and when they had gone, Tannhäuser repeated the hymn upon his knees.

A short time afterwards, it happened that the Landgrave of Thuringia and his minstrel knights passed through the valley on their return from a great forest-hunt, and seeing the kneeling Knight, they drew near to learn who he was, and whence he came.

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But when Tannhäuser rose and faced them on their approach, they recognised him at once as their long-lost brother-minstrel, whom they had sought so vainly; and receiving him joyfully, they eagerly demanded of him where he had hidden himself so long, begging him to return with them to the castle.

Tannhäuser replied that he had wandered far into strange and distant realms in search of peace and rest, which he had not found; and he declared he could not rejoin their beloved ranks, since he had resolved to lead the lonely pilgrim's life of devotion.

Then a noble young knight, named Wolfram, who had been his dearest friend in the old days, stepped forward, and said that the fair Princess Elisabeth still mourned the absence of the favourite minstrel, whose sweet music had filled her heart with love and rapture; and he added:

“When thou in scorn hadst left us,
Her heart was closed to joy and song.
Of her sweet presence she bereft us,
For thee in vain she wearied long.
Oh, Minstrel bold, return and rest thee,
Once more awake thy joyous strain,
Cast off the burden that oppress'd thee,
And her fair star will shine again!”

The name of Elisabeth acted like a charm upon Tannhäuser, for love of this sweet royal maid still filled his whole heart, strengthened and deepened by the struggles he had gone through; and learning thus for

certain that his love was returned, he flung aside all thoughts of a pilgrim's life, and cried out joyfully: "What joy! What joy! Oh, guide my steps to her!"

The whole valley was by this time full of nobles and squires in hunting green, and when the Landgrave sounded his bugle, he was answered by a joyous peal from the merry huntsmen as they gathered round.

Then the brilliant cavalcade rode gaily forward with Tannhäuser in their midst, and when they reached the castle, high revels were held in honour of the Minstrel Knight's return. The chief of these revels was a grand Tournament of Song, and it was announced that the prize of the victor was to be the hand of the Princess Elisabeth, who, having learnt with joy of the return of Tannhäuser, had gladly agreed to be present, and to offer her hand as the reward, knowing full well who would gain it.

When the day of the contest arrived, the Landgrave, minstrels, and the whole Court assembled in the famous Hall of Song within the royal castle; and as the Princess Elisabeth entered with her train of fair maidens, she was received amongst them with great joy.

But Elisabeth had eyes for none other but Tannhäuser, who dropped on his knees before her, and raising him gently from the ground, she told him of the woe she had suffered during his absence, and of the joy she now felt at his return.

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When Tannhäuser heard these gracious words, and knew that he might now win the hand of his dear Princess, he was full of happiness; and he told her that it was his great love that had always made his music so sweet in the old days.

And now the Landgrave announced that the theme of the contest was to be Nature and Praise of Love; and one by one the minstrel knights stepped forward to sing their songs.

The noble young Wolfram began the contest, and as he vainly loved the Princess Elisabeth with his whole heart, he addressed his song to her as a humble worshipper, whose only desire was to adore her from afar, and live and die in her service.

The other minstrels described the nature of their love in a similar strain; and then Tannhäuser sprang forward, and passionately disputed all that they had said. Having loved profanely himself, and being full of impatience at what he called their cold and timid hearts, he outraged the whole company by describing to them the voluptuous ideas of love he had gained from his sojourn in the Court of Venus; and led away by his exaltation, he addressed himself to the fair goddess herself, declaring that none but those who had enjoyed the enchantments of her embraces were worthy to speak of Love.

When his wild and beautiful song came to an end, a loud chorus of dismay and indignation arose from the company, and

the minstrel knights, full of horror because one of their number had been in the Court of the heathen goddess, rushed upon Tannhäuser with drawn swords, uttering curses, and declaring that the gates of Heaven were now closed on him for ever.

But quick the beautiful Elisabeth sprang in front of her lover, and, though utterly crushed with disappointment at his unworthiness, she bade the knights stand back and refrain their curses and reproaches, since repentance was still left to the poor sinner.

The Landgrave now pronounced sentence of banishment upon Tannhäuser, but since Elisabeth had interceded for him, he declared hers to be the voice of Heaven, and held out one ray of hope. He commanded him to join the band of holy pilgrims now passing through the land on their way to the sacred shrine at Rome, and there, repentant and humble, to seek forgiveness from the Pope, not daring to return unless by him forgiven.

Elisabeth again besought her lover to repent, and set his thoughts alone on Heaven, and Tannhäuser, full of despair, seeing now that an illusion had blinded him, rushed off to join the ranks of the pilgrims, humbly praying as he went.

When the pilgrims had left the country, Elisabeth gave herself up entirely to Heavenly thoughts and devotions, and every day she went to kneel before a shrine at the foot of the mountain to pray that Heaven's

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forgiveness might come upon her lover, and that he might be restored to her.

Slowly and sadly the months went by ; and at last the day came on which the pilgrims were expected to pass by on their return from Rome.

Early in the morning Elisabeth went to the Virgin's shrine in the valley to pray ; and the faithful Wolfram, who loved her still in vain, kept watch on the path above, and nobly prayed Heaven to send the lovers a happy meeting.

At length a holy chant was heard in the distance, and soon afterwards the band of pilgrims came trooping down the mountain path and passed along the valley, singing joyous songs of thankfulness because their repentance had been accepted and their sins forgiven.

Wolfram and Elisabeth eagerly scanned the passing pilgrims with anxious eyes ; but Tannhäuser was not amongst them.

Full of grief and disappointment, the royal maiden now resolved to leave the outside world, with its troubles and pains, and seek peace in the pure, calm life of a nun ; and kneeling once more before the shrine, she solemnly consecrated herself to the Virgin in these beautiful words :

“ Oh, blessed Virgin, hear my prayer !
Thou star of glory, look on me !
Here in the dust I bend before thee,
Now from this earth, oh set me free !

Let me, a maiden pure and white,
Enter into thy kingdom bright !
In this hour, oh grant thy aid !
Till thy eternal peace thou give me.
I vow to live and die thy maid,
And on thy bounty I will call,
That heavenly grace on him may fall."

Then Elisabeth arose in peace and returned to the Castle ; but her heart was broken, and a few hours later she died in the arms of her weeping maidens.

When evening fell, Wolfram, sad at heart, stood alone on the mountain side, and still thinking of his lost love, his voice presently broke forth into a low, sweet song.

"Oh star of eve, thy tender beam
Smiles on my spirit's troubled dream.
From heart that ne'er its trust betrayed,
Greet, when she passes, the peerless maid !
Bear her beyond this vale of sorrow
To fields of light that know no morrow."

The sound of the Minstrel's singing caused a crouching figure on the mountain path to draw nearer, and in this grief-stricken form, clad in a pilgrim's robe, Wolfram recognised the wretched Tannhäuser.

Still scorning his friend for having, as he supposed, deserted the pilgrims' ranks and never made the journey to Rome, Wolfram drew back ; but when Tannhäuser assured him that he had indeed visited the sacred shrine, and returned uncomforted, he was filled with pity instead, and willingly listened to his sad tale.

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Then Tannhäuser told him that, full of the humblest repentance, he had made the journey to Rome, gladly enduring more hardships and sufferings than any of the other pilgrims.

“When I beheld a heavy burdened pilgrim,
It seemed to me his load was all too light.
And if he sought a pathway o’er the meadow,
I trod, unshod, amid the rock and thorns.
If he refreshed his lips by cooling fountains,
The brazen sun poured on my head forlorn,
When he besought the saints in murmur’d prayer,
I shed my life-blood in the cause divine ;
When in the hospice he sought rest and shelter,
On ice and snow it was that I sought mine !”

Amidst such hardships as these the poor pilgrim had at length reached Rome, and humbly kneeling before the sacred shrine, he begged the Pope to grant him Heaven’s forgiveness.

But when the Pope had listened to his confession he said the sin was too great for pardon, and he declared that it was as impossible for one who had dwelt in the evil Courts of Venus to hope for Heaven’s forgiveness as it was for the rood in his hand to put forth green leaves.

And then, scorned by one and all, with his sin still unabsolved, and the hand of Elisabeth farther away from him than ever, the wretched Tannhäuser had followed in the wake of the homeward-bound pilgrims, and now, having finished his story, and

being full of despair, he called wildly upon the goddess Venus to receive him into her dazzling Courts of Love once more.

In answer to his call, the sounds of enchanting music were distinctly heard in the distance, and in a thick, billowy mist that began to encircle the Hørselberg, the lovely form of Venus became dimly visible; but Wolfram implored the despairing Knight to refrain from again sharing these evil joys that would ruin his soul, and to still think only of repentance for his sin.

But Tannhäuser was hopeless, and felt that, scorned by the world, and denied to Heaven, the Court of Venus was the only haven left to him, and though he loathed the thought of its cloying pleasures, he was just about to yield to the enticing calls of the fair goddess, when another incident occurred.

At this moment, the solemn funeral procession of Elisabeth came slowly by, and passed along the mountain path, with mourning knights and weeping maidens singing a low requiem hymn, and at the same time, a fresh band of pilgrims appeared on the heights above and announced that a miracle had taken place on the night of Tannhäuser's departure from Rome. The Pope's rood had put forth fresh green leaves by morning light, and taking this as a sign of Heaven's favour, he had sent messengers into every part to proclaim that Tannhäuser's sin was forgiven, and his repentance accepted.

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Full of thankfulness that the prayers of Elisabeth, now an angel in Heaven, had been thus answered, Wolfram joined the pilgrims in their rejoicings for the forgiven sinner, whilst Venus disappeared within her mountain once more; but Tannhäuser, overcome with joy, and filled with a wonderful peace, sank dying beside the bier of his beloved one, and the golden gates of Heaven were opened to him at last.

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

THERE was once a Dutch sea-captain who was so brave and fearless that no amount of danger seemed to daunt him. Battling with the wild winds and waves was the greatest joy to him, and his light-hearted daring carried him through many a difficult passage.

But at last the crowning test of his courage came; for, on a voyage round the coast of Africa, there arose the most furious tempest that had ever been known in those seas. All prudent seamen at once sought refuge in harbours and sheltering bays, casting their anchors until the storm should abate; but the Dutch captain only laughed at the fears of his crew when they implored him to do likewise, and, casting prudence to the winds, he swore that in spite of the raging hurricane he would double the Cape of Good Hope without delay, even if he kept on sailing for ever.

Now it happened that this foolish vow was overheard by the Evil One, who was in the very heart of the tempest, and, as a punish-

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ment for his vain boast, he condemned the rash captain to sail the seas until the Day of Judgment. The only hope of release held out to him was to find a pure and lovely maiden who would be willing to love him faithfully until death; and for this purpose he was allowed to go on shore once in every seven years to seek for such a saviour.

Full of remorse and despair, the unhappy captain began his ceaseless voyage, and the mad recklessness of his speed soon won for him the name of the "Flying Dutchman."

The fame of his terrible plight, and of the evil influence surrounding him, became world-wide, and all good sailors tried to avoid the doomed ship, crossing themselves devoutly whenever its blood-red sails and black masts appeared in sight.

Once in every seven years the Flying Dutchman went on shore; but he always returned disappointed and despairing, for no maiden could be found willing to share his fate and to be loving and faithful to him until death. And so, for years and centuries, the ill-fated man sailed the seas unceasingly, and though he daily courted death, yet death came not to him, and every danger passed him by.

At length, after many hopeless centuries had gone by, the Flying Dutchman steered his ship towards the rugged coast of Norway, and as another seven years' term was just now at an end, he determined to go on shore and begin his hopeless quest once more.

By this time his vessel was laden with gold and jewels gathered from the sea and coasts of many lands, and by bestowing his treasures lavishly, he knew he would soon gain acquaintance with some one.

As he drew near to the shores of a lonely bay, he found a Norwegian vessel already there before him, having sought shelter from a passing storm, and presently he entered into conversation with the captain, and tried to make friends with him.

The Norwegian captain, whose name was Daland, welcomed the stranger very kindly ; and he told him that he only waited in this dreary spot until the storm abated, when he should eagerly make for his home, a few miles further along the coast, where his fair daughter was watching for his return.

When the Flying Dutchman heard that the Norwegian had a daughter, he was very glad ; and presently he eagerly offered to Daland the whole of his vast treasures, if he would give him in return a few days' hospitality, and his daughter as a bride.

Now Daland, who was somewhat greedy of gold, had long desired to find such a wealthy husband for his beautiful daughter, and, though he knew nothing of the stranger before him, and felt somewhat afraid of his weird looks and mysterious crew, he could not resist the desire to possess the wonderful treasures described to him. So he gladly gave the Dutchman permission to woo the maiden, and a short time afterwards, the

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storm having passed away, the two ships set sail for Daland's home.

In the meanwhile, the household of the Norwegian captain had been eagerly awaiting his return for some time, and on the day of his expected arrival, his fair daughter, Senta, was spinning with her maidens in the principal room of the house.

Dame Mary, the old nurse, was in charge of the work, and under her directions the pretty maidens were kept busily employed, singing merry songs to the hum of their spinning-wheels.

Only one of the maidens was idle; and this was the beautiful young mistress—Senta herself—who sat with her hands folded, pensively gazing at a picture upon the wall. The picture was a portrait of the Flying Dutchman, who had been once seen by an artist years ago, and whose story told in ballad and legend was well known in Norway; and as Senta looked upon that pale, sad face, a great pity for the poor wanderer's terrible fate arose within her.

This face had such a wonderful fascination for the tender maiden, that a great love and devotion grew up in her heart for the tortured soul she longed to comfort; and on this day of her father's return, she gazed upon the picture with more intentness than usual, for she had dreamed many times of late that its subject stood before her as a real living lover.

But Dame Mary did not care to see her

sweet young mistress gaze so frequently upon the face of one whom Satan had claimed for his own, and presently she called out sharply to her: "Thou careless girl! Wilt thou not spin?"

Then the other maidens begged her also to join them in their spinning, and not to waste her sighs and thoughts on one who could never be her lover; but Senta said she was tired of the hum of spinning-wheels, and asked Dame Mary to tell them again the legend of the Flying Dutchman.

But Dame Mary would not do so; and then Senta herself sang the whole ballad through from beginning to end, in her sweet, soft voice.

She described the rash vow of the daring captain, and the awful doom it had brought upon him; and the song excited her to such passionate depths of pity, that, at the end of it, she stretched out her arms and cried aloud, as though the spectral seaman himself stood before her:

"I am the one who through her love will save thee!

Oh, may the Angels hither guide thee!

Through me, may new-found joy betide thee!"

As she uttered these wild words, which caused Dame Mary and her maidens to cry out in horror, a handsome young huntsman, named Erik, entered the room, and heard all; and having loved the fair Senta from childhood, and believed himself beloved in

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return, he rushed to her side in alarm, imploring her not to forsake him.

He then announced that Daland's ship had just arrived, accompanied by another and unknown vessel; and when Dame Mary and the maidens had hastily departed to set food ready for their master's welcome, he turned again to Senta, and begged her to assure him once more of her love, and to help him to gain her father's consent to their marriage, knowing full well that Daland desired a wealthier suitor for his daughter than a poor huntsman.

The beautiful Senta only laughed at his doubts, and when he reproached her with gazing so constantly at the picture on the wall, she declared it was but pity that filled her heart for the subject of it.

But Erik was not satisfied, and he went on to describe a vision he had lately had, in which he had seen Senta give her hand to this very phantom captain, who embraced her rapturously, and led her to his vessel; and when Senta heard this, the glamour of her strange fascination came over her again, and she cried out wildly :

"He seeks for me, and I for him !
For him will I risk life and limb !"

Erik rushed away, wringing his hands with grief, feeling now that Senta must be under some strange and evil spell; and at this moment, Daland entered the room with his mysterious guest, whom as yet he did not

know to be the Flying Dutchman. He held out his arms lovingly, expecting his daughter to rush forward and embrace him as she had always done before on his return from sea ; but Senta, with wide-open, intense eyes, was gazing fixedly beyond him at the stranger in the doorway.

There, in the living flesh, she beheld the face that had fascinated all her maiden days ; and, spell-bound with astonishment, she turned to embrace her father, as in a trance, saying : " My father, say, who is this stranger ? "

Then Daland explained how he had met with the strange captain and taken pity on his loneliness ; and he eagerly added :

" Wilt thou, my child, accord our guest a friendly welcome ?

And wilt thou also let him share thy kindly heart ?
Give him thy hand, for bridegroom it is thine to call him !

If thou but give consent, to-morrow his thou art.
Look on these gems ; look on the bracelets !
To what he owns, trifles are these !
Dost thou, my child, not long to have them ?
And all art thine, when thou art his ! "

As he spoke, Daland, with the gleam of avarice in his eyes, spread out on a table the jewels and gold the Flying Dutchman had already given him from his treasure-laden ship ; but seeing that Senta did not even glance at them, he thought it wiser to retire, and leave the stranger to plead his own cause.

When he had gone, the Flying Dutchman,

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with trembling hope, seized the hands of Senta and implored her to share his lonely fate, declaring that he had seen her in visions long ago, and believed her to be the one who should save him from his woes, and bring him peace and rest at last ; and Senta, with rapture, consented to be his bride, telling him that she had also seen him in her dreams, and had longed to release him from his sorrows.

When the Flying Dutchman thus knew that Senta was acquainted with his sad story, and willing to break the evil spell that had been cast upon him, he was transported with joy ; and yet he nobly begged her to think of the sacrifice she was about to make by sharing his lot. To which the fair maiden replied heroically :

“ Him whom I choose, him I love only,
And loving, e'en till death !
Here is my hand ! I will not rue !
But e'en to death will I be true ! ”

At this moment Daland returned, and, full of joy at seeing that Senta was willing to accept the stranger he had chosen for her husband, he gladly joined their hands.

He then invited them to return with him to the shore ; for it was always his custom, at the end of a voyage, to give a feast to the crew on board his ship.

When they arrived upon the shore, a gay scene was already taking place. Dame Mary and her merry maidens had brought food and wine on deck, and the jolly sailors were

soon greeting their pretty sweethearts, and feasting, laughing, and singing with thankful hearts.

In strange contrast to this merriment, complete silence reigned on board the Flying Dutchman's ship, and though food and wine had also been brought out for the stranger's crew, they kept down below, and gave no sound of life at all. It was in vain that the maidens tried to attract their attention, and at length, alarmed at the strange looks of the silent vessel, they desisted altogether.

And then, when the Norwegian sailors, in their own enjoyment, had almost forgotten the presence of the strangers, the mysterious crew of the Flying Dutchman suddenly roused up and began to sing, in harsh, unearthly tones, a wild song, in which they told the story of their ill-fated master; and at the same time a dark, bluish flame gleamed around them, and loud rumblings of a storm were heard.

At first the startled Norwegians looked on in wonder, and tried to drown these weird sounds with their own gay singing; but after awhile they grew alarmed, and, overcome by the dreadful scene, and full of horror, they hurriedly crossed themselves and retired to the cabin. On seeing this, the crew of the phantom ship burst into a peal of shrill, demoniacal laughter; and then the ghastly flame died slowly away, the stormy rumblings ceased, and silence reigned once more.

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The Norwegians now knew that the dreaded and shunned Flying Dutchman and his evil crew from the abodes of darkness were in their midst ; and Erik the Huntsman, shocked and horrified, rushed towards Senta, and implored her to renounce the stranger whose evil fate she had agreed to share. He passionately pleaded his own faithful love, begging her to accept it once again ; and he reminded her of the old sweet days when she had been contented to love him, saying :

“ Hast thou forgot that day when thou didst call me,
Call me to thee, yon pleasant vale within?
When, counting not what labour might befall
me,
Fearless I climbed, gay flow'rs for thee to win?
Bethink thee, how, upon the headland standing,
We watch'd thy father from the shore depart,
He, ere we mark'd his gleaming sail expanding,
He bade thee trust my fond and faithful heart,
Why thrill'd my soul to feel my hand clasp'd in
thine?
Say, was it not that it told me thou wert true?”

These tender, pleading words were heard by the Flying Dutchman, who was hovering near ; and the wretched man, full of disappointment and despair, believing that Senta was about to renounce him, rushed on board his own ship and drew the anchor, crying out wildly : “ Abandoned ! All is for ever lost ! Senta, farewell ! ”

But Senta, though torn by Erik's pleading, still found her love and devotion to the Flying Dutchman the strongest feeling in

her heart, and, rushing forward to follow him, she cried :

“Canst thou doubt if I am faithful ?
Unhappy ! What has blinded thee ?
Oh stay ! The vow we made forsake not !
What I have promised, kept shall be !”

Erik, Daland, and others seized the distraught maiden as she fled, full of horror at the sacrifice she was about to make for one whose evil doom affrighted them ; and whilst they held her back, the Flying Dutchman, though utterly bereft of hope, nobly vowed that he would release her from her promise to him, and sail away at once.

But Senta was determined to share the sad doom of the hero of her dreams, and by her faithful love to break the cruel spell that had bound him so long ; and struggling until she freed herself from those who so vainly tried to hold her back, she ran forward to the edge of an overhanging cliff close by, stretching out her arms, and crying wildly to the hopeless figure on the departing vessel :

“Well do I know thee—Well do I know thy doom !
I knew thy face when I beheld thee first !
The end of thine affliction comes :
My love till death shall take thy curse away !
Here stand I, faithful, yea, till death !”

With these heroic words, the gentle, devoted maiden, in a transport of joy, cast herself into the sea ; and, immediately

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afterwards, the phantom ship sank beneath the waves, which arose, and receded again in a mighty whirlpool.

As the Norwegians gazed with awe and astonishment upon this wondrous sight, they saw, in the golden glow of the setting sun, two ethereal forms rising together from the sea over the wreck, and floating upwards towards the Heavens.

They were Senta and the Flying Dutchman, their arms entwined in a loving embrace, and a look of perfect peace and everlasting joy upon their radiant, upturned faces.

The ransom had been paid; and the Flying Dutchman was at rest for evermore, with the fair, sweet maiden who had loved him faithfully until death!

TRISTAN AND ISOLDA

IN the glorious days of Chivalry, when King Arthur and his knights were gaining honour and renown by their noble deeds, a stately barque might have been seen one golden noontide swiftly approaching the shores of Cornwall. Tristan, a valiant Cornish knight, far-famed for his prowess and untarnished honour, was bringing the beautiful Princess Isolda of Ireland as a bride for his uncle, King Mark, who held his Court at Tyntagel, in Cornwall; and as they drew near to their native shores, the ruddy sailors broke forth into a glad song of greeting, rejoicing at the safe conclusion of their honourable mission.

But there was no joy in the heart of Tristan, and he stood at the helm, silent and full of gloom. For he, himself, loved this fair Princess of Ireland; but a dark blood-feud between them had forced him to stifle his own passion, and to secure her as a bride for another.

And a tumult was also raging in the heart of the proud Isolda, for she resented

the alliance that had been made for her, and was filled with anger against the knight who came as ambassador to bear her away. For they had met before, these two, and a dread secret lay between them.

For many years there had been war between Ireland and Cornwall, and at last the King of Ireland had felt himself powerful enough to claim tribute from King Mark.

Morold, the cousin and lover of Isolda, was sent to levy the tax; but he met with a sorry reception.

For Tristan, the nephew and bravest knight of King Mark, indignantly resented the claim, and challenged Morold to mortal combat on the shore; and, to his joy, he defeated and slew the Irish knight, whose head was sent back as the only tribute the subjects of King Mark would pay to Ireland.

But Tristan, himself, had also been grievously wounded by his adversary, and after searching in vain for a healer for his hurts, he crawled into a small boat and set it adrift in his feverish despair. The wind and waves bore the frail craft far out from the coast, and at last the wounded knight found himself cast upon the shores of Ireland.

Here he was hospitably received by the Irish King and his beautiful daughter, to whom he gave his name as Tantris; and the Princess Isolda, being greatly skilled in leech-craft, and famous for her knowledge of balsams and simples, set herself the task

of healing the stranger's wounds. His noble appearance and pitiful plight soon won her heart, and Tristan, loving the fair princess directly he beheld her, was quick to vow fealty to her.

But one day, as Isolda sat watching beside the couch of her charge, she noticed in the sick man's discarded sword a curiously-shaped notch, which exactly fitted a splinter of steel that had been found imbedded in the skull of Morold, whose head had lately arrived from Cornwall as a ghastly token of defeat and defiance.

Knowing now that it was the world-renowned Tristan, the bold defier and enemy of Ireland, the slayer of her cousin and former lover, Morold, who lay before her, and whom she had nursed so tenderly, Isolda was filled with scorn and anger; and seizing the tell-tale sword in her hand, she rushed furiously forward, intending to plunge it in his heart. But Tristan's eyes met hers in such a pleading, helpless glance that the angry princess was quickly filled with pity, and felt she could not harm him as he lay thus in feebleness, and letting the sword drop gently to the ground, she crushed her revengeful feelings, and continued her nursing of the sick man. Yet Tristan did not dare to speak of love to her again, feeling that Isolda would now regard his slaying of Morold as a blood-feud and barrier between them; and as soon as his wounds were sufficiently healed, he returned to Cornwall.

Soon after this, peace was declared between the two countries; and as the crowning pledge of the truce, King Mark was persuaded by his knights to ask the hand of the Princess Isolda in marriage. Tristan joined heartily in pressing forward this plan; for, believing that Isolda was now lost to him, he felt that he could reward her best for her kindness to him by making her Queen of Cornwall.

But King Mark was growing old, and being childless, had decided to make Tristan his heir: and it was not until his beloved nephew himself added his entreaties to the desires of the courtiers that he at length gave consent. Then, when peace and friendship had been sworn by both nations, and the King of Ireland had willingly agreed to bestow his daughter upon King Mark as the pledge of their truce, Tristan was despatched in a gilded barge to conduct the lovely bride to her new home.

Isolda submitted to her father's will with due filial obedience and reverence; but her heart was filled with scorn and hot anger against the brave knight she had nursed back to life and health. As she now reclined in her curtained recess within the stately vessel that bore her so swiftly away from her native land, she declared passionately to her attendant handmaid, Brangæna, that she had been betrayed by Tristan; for after vowing fealty to her in Ireland, he had but returned to demand her in marriage for his kinsman. Brangæna, alarmed at this outburst, attempted

to sooth her mistress's angry feelings by assuring her that Sir Tristan had doubtless meant to show his gratitude by making her Queen of Cornwall; and she added that King Mark, though advancing in years, was good and noble in disposition, and worthy of admiration and regard.

But Isolda gazed impatiently beyond the curtains at the silent, motionless figure of Tristan, wondering sadly how she could support a loveless life so near that glorious knight, who now seemed so indifferent to her; for Tristan, struggling to repress the love in his heart, had kept sternly aloof from his fair charge throughout the voyage, fearing to trust himself in her presence. This seeming unkindness and studied coldness enraged the proud and unhappy princess to such a pitch that she determined they should die together before landing in Cornwall; and she sent Brangæna to the helm to command Tristan's immediate presence in her recess.

At first Tristan refused to leave the helm, remembering his duty and loyalty to his royal uncle; but when, just as they were approaching the shore, Isolda sent another message, imperiously declaring that she would not land in Cornwall unless he sought her pardon first, the trembling knight was forced to yield to her request.

Isolda meanwhile opened her casket of drugs and simples, saying she desired a potion that would cure her of all her woes; and selecting a phial containing a deadly

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poison, she bade Brangæna pour it out into a golden cup.

But Brangæna was horror-struck, and, determined to save her beloved mistress from the consequences of so rash a resolve, she poured away the poison, unseen by Isolda, and filled the golden cup instead with a love-philtre that the Queen of Ireland, skilled in sorcery, had placed in the casket for her daughter to drink with her husband on her wedding-night.

When Tristan appeared within the recess, Isolda began to pour forth bitter words of reproach upon him, declaring that though she had preserved his life when he lay in feebleness before her, she had still sworn vengeance upon him ; and then, offering him the golden cup, she bade him drink its contents with her as a final truce to all their strife. The ship was by this time at the landing-stage, where King Mark already stood with his lords, waiting to receive the lovely bride, and, full of despair, Tristan took the proffered cup and began to drink.

When he had swallowed half the draught, Isolda snatched the goblet from his trembling hand, and drank the remainder ; and then the two stood and gazed into each other's eyes in wonder and bewilderment. For the strange potion was coursing wildly through their veins like a fiery stream, changing all their dull despair into the glow of passion, and filling their hearts with uncontrollable love and desire for each other ; and at last,

utterly powerless to fight against the ecstasy within them, they fell into each other's arms, overcome by a rapture they could not quell.

Brangæna, terror-stricken at the dire result of her fond deed, implored the lovers to recollect their duty and the scene that was going on around them, for all their lords and attendants were now waiting for Tristan to conduct his royal charge to King Mark.

But the pair seemed wrapped in a sweet dream from which the joyous cries of greeting gradually awakened them; and then, when they realised what had happened, they were filled with despair, and Isolda sank back half-fainting into Tristan's outstretched arms.

But Brangæna, eager to prevent the immediate discovery of their hapless love, quickly roused her mistress, and hung upon her shoulders the gorgeous royal mantle that had been provided for her nuptials; and then Tristan, as in a trance, with woe in his heart, led his beloved one forth from the ship, and delivered her into the hands of his Sovereign.

Isolda and King Mark were immediately wedded, amidst great rejoicings; but although the unhappy victims of the fatal love-potion had strength to loyally fulfil this pledge of peace between the two countries, they could not long keep their devouring passion within bounds. With the help of the devoted and remorseful Brangæna, they frequently met in secret, and the rapture of these stolen inter-

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views was as balm to their bleeding hearts, the one sweet chain that kept them still bound to life.

But Tristan had an enemy, a knight named Melot, who, under the disguise of friendship, had gained his confidence and learnt the secret of his hopeless passion, and who, having no real love for the man he called his friend, determined to use this woeful secret for his own base ends. For Melot was jealous of the renown and noble qualities of Tristan, and longed to supplant him in the regard of his royal master; and having now discovered a weapon to his hand in the secret confided to him by the unsuspecting knight, he eagerly sought an opportunity for betraying him, and quickly found one.

Having persuaded the King to arrange a royal hunt one beautiful summer night, the crafty Melot easily induced Tristan to remain behind, and so secure a long, sweet interview with his beloved Isolda; but the false friend gaily joined in the chase, intending to return in a short time with the King to entrap the lovers.

When the hunting party had departed into the depths of the forest, and the merry sounds of the horns could only be heard in the far distance, Isolda crept forth from the silent castle, followed by her faithful handmaid, and bidding Brangæna keep watch near the forest, she flung a lighted torch to the ground, this being the signal for Tristan's

approach. She then ran down the steps towards a moon-lit avenue, and in another moment the lovers were clasped in each other's arms.

It was a moment of intense joy ; and as the enraptured pair reclined together upon a mossy bank studded with sleeping flowers, they poured out to each other, in tenderest phrases, the passionate love they were compelled to keep pent within their hearts before the eyes of the world. It was midnight, but the happy lovers cared naught for time, and would gladly have remained in such sweet converse for ever.

But suddenly there was a cry from Brangæna, who rushed wildly forward, declaring that they were betrayed ; and next moment, King Mark and a few of his lords broke hastily into the avenue, having been led to the spot by Melot, who had found an opportunity during the hunt to inform his royal master of the lovers' intended meeting.

At first King Mark had refused to believe that his noblest and best-beloved knight could thus betray his honour ; but as he stepped into the avenue, and the living proof of it met his gaze, he was filled with deepest grief, and began to pour forth bitter reproaches upon the wretched Tristan, who vainly endeavoured to hide Isolde's shrinking form from the scornful gaze of the courtiers.

Stung by the just reproaches of the King, and enraged at the cruel treachery of his false friend, Tristan drew his sword and

challenged Melot to fight; and in his despair, caring little to defend himself, he allowed his adversary to overcome him, and soon fell to the ground, mortally wounded.

Isolda was borne back fainting to the castle, followed by King Mark and his courtiers; and Tristan was carried, in a dying condition, on board a vessel by his faithful henchman, Kurvenal, who quickly set sail for Brittany, where his master owned a castle overlooking the sea.

Here the sick man was at length placed in safety by Kurvenal, who endeavoured to restore him to health; but finding that his beloved master's wounds were too serious for him to heal, and that he grew worse instead of better, the poor henchman was in despair. At last he bethought him to send for Isolda herself, whom he knew to be greatly skilled in leech-craft; and thinking only of his master's physical needs, he despatched a messenger in a swift vessel, to entreat the beautiful Queen to come and heal her almost dying lover.

For several days after, Tristan remained in an unconscious state, but upon being brought out into an open courtyard one sunny noontide, he awoke from his torpor, and feebly asked for Isolda. Kurvenal answered that he had sent for her to come with healing balsams for his wounds, and, running to the walls, he exclaimed joyfully that the vessel was even now returning, with Isolda on board.

Tristan was overjoyed at this glad news. and when Kurvenal presently went to receive the welcome guest at the castle gates, the wounded man's excitement knew no bounds. In his eagerness to see his beloved one once again, he endeavoured to crawl from the couch ; but the effort of moving caused his terrible wounds to open afresh, and just as Isolde rushed through the gateway, he uttered her name with a gasping cry of joy, and fell back dead upon the couch.

Isolde, with a loud shriek of woe, fell fainting upon his prostrate body, and at that moment Kurvenal was hailed by a second vessel that had immediately followed in the wake of the first. On this barque were King Mark with his knights, and also Brangæna, and quickly surmising that they were come with hostile intentions, the brave henchman barricaded the entrance to the castle, and refused admittance to the newcomers, who had instantly landed.

Then when the eager knights, by their superior force, broke through the gateway, Kurvenal sprang furiously upon them and fought desperately, in spite of their cries that they came in peace. The first to enter was the traitor, Melot, and with a cry of triumph, Kurvenal thrust him through the heart. Then, receiving a mortal wound himself, the faithful henchman crawled to the couch of the dead Tristan, and feeling for his beloved master's hand, he sank, dying, at his feet.

King Mark and his party now rushed forward, unhindered ; and Brangæna, raising her still breathing mistress in her arms, besought her to revive, since she had come with good news for her. For upon the flight of Isolda to the aid of Tristan, Brangæna had, in desperation, sought King Mark, and told him of how, quite unconsciously, Tristan and Isolda had swallowed the magic potion that had made them lovers for life ; and, rejoicing to learn that his best-loved knight and beautiful Queen were thus free from blame, since they were powerless to fight against the mighty philtre, the noble-hearted King was filled with pity for the sufferings they had endured. He resolved generously to renounce Isolda, and permit the unhappy lovers to be united, and immediately entering his ship, he had followed with Brangæna and his knights in the wake of the flying Queen.

But the vessel had arrived too late, for Tristan was already dead ; and, full of grief, King Mark knelt, weeping, at the foot of the couch. And it was in vain that Brangæna tried to raise the quivering form of her beloved mistress ; for Isolda's heart was broken, and with a last despairing cry, she fell back lifeless to the ground.

Thus had the magic philtre wrought destruction, and in death only were the lovers united.

THE NIBELUNG'S RING

PART I

THE RHINE GOLD

IN the rocky depths of the wild Rhine river three lovely water-nymphs—Flosshildr, Woglinda, and Wellgunda — were merrily swimming hither and thither one dusky twilight; for though it was their duty to guard a certain mighty treasure, they found their task a light one, since no one had ever sought to rob them of it.

This evening, however, a visitor came to them at last; and suddenly, the Rhine nymphs ceased their gambols in great surprise, on beholding a stranger in their midst. From a deep cleft in the rocks below a hideous black gnome had appeared, for Alberic the Nibelung, being of an adventurous spirit, had wandered upwards from Nibelheim, the underground abode of the gnomes, eager for fresh exploits.

As he now gazed upon the lovely Rhine-nymphs, he was suddenly filled with a longing

desire to possess one of them as a bride, and uttering a friendly greeting, he endeavoured to ingratiate himself with them. The water-maidens, however, scorned his advances, laughing at his ugly appearance; and when, incited by the fierce desire within him, he vainly tried to seize first one and then another in his grasp, they swam merrily away, leading him on with teasing taunts from rock to rock, until he was quite exhausted.

Presently, on approaching a central rock, upon which the nymphs had ensconced themselves, he was astonished to behold a wondrous gleam of gold issuing from its peak, and delighted at this dazzling radiance, he asked what it was. The maidens replied that the marvellous glow he saw came from the precious treasure they had been set to guard, the Rhine Gold, which could only be torn from the rock by one who had forsworn for ever all the delights of love, and who might then shape from it a magic Ring that would gain him mighty power in the world.

On hearing this, Alberic, who had always longed for power, determined to gain the treasure; and loudly declaring that he renounced love and its delights for ever, he climbed the rock, and by a mighty effort wrenched the magic gold from its summit. The Rhine nymphs, now powerless to protect their treasure, dived back into the water with cries of despair, and Alberic triumphantly returned to Nibelheim with his prize.

Soon after this incident, the chief of the gods, Wotan, the All-Father, entered into an agreement with two powerful giants, Fasolt and Fafnir, to build him a noble castle in Asgard, the abode of the gods; and in payment for this service, he promised to bestow upon them Freia, the goddess of Youth and Beauty.

Awakening one dawning day upon a flowery mountain side, where he had been slumbering beside his celestial spouse, Fricka, the goddess of Marriage, he saw glittering turrets of a glorious mansion upon a distant rocky height, and knew that the task was done; and arousing Fricka, he proudly pointed out to her their new abode, to which he gave the name of Valhalla.

Just then, however, the beautiful Freia fled to them for protection, and closely pursuing came the two giants, demanding her as the payment agreed upon for the task they had just completed.

But Wotan now refused to give up the beloved Freia, and when the giants, furious at his refusal, again demanded their rights, he turned eagerly for help to Loki, the god of Deceit, at whose mischievous instigation he had entered into the compact. Loki had promised the great god to assist him in preventing the giants from obtaining the reward agreed upon for their labours, and he now cunningly related the story of how the Rhine nymphs had lost their magic gold to Alberic the gnome, hoping

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to excite the giant's interest in a treasure that could secure the holder such mighty power.

His ruse succeeded ; for the two giants now declared that they would accept Alberic's treasure in lieu of the Goddess Freia, and they desired Wotan to set forth, and rob the gnome at once.

Wotan, however, was furious at being asked to turn thief, and angrily refused to do their bidding ; and upon this, Fasolt and Fafnir suddenly seized Freia, and ran off with her, declaring that they would hold her in pledge until the Rhine Gold treasure was delivered to them.

And now, a dreadful misfortune befell the dwellers in Asgard ; for Freia was the guardian of a magic apple-tree, the fruit of which, eaten daily, alone preserved their youth and immortality. Deprived of the beautiful guardian's care, the apples began to fade and die, and the gods, consequently, quickly found themselves growing old and withered, and their radiant strength departing.

Full of horror, Wotan was now forced to secure the return of Freia at the price named by the giants, and, accompanied by Loki, he descended through a rocky cleft to Nibelheim.

Here they made their way to the cave of Alberic, whose brother, Mime, they found crouching beside his blacksmith's forge, smarting from recent blows. For by this

time Alberic had shaped from the Rhine Gold a magic Ring of marvellous power, and by means of it had made himself the ruler of Nibelheim, forcing the unhappy gnomes to slave day and night, amassing treasure-hoards for him. He had also compelled his brother, Mime, the most skilful smith in that land of forges, to make him a *Tarnhelm*, or wishing-cap, by means of which he could render himself invisible, or take on the form of any creature he chose.

Having learnt this from Mime, who was even now smarting from the blows of his tyrant-brother, the two gods laid their plans; and when Alberic presently appeared, they greeted him in friendly tones, and invited him to show them the wonderful powers of his *Tarnhelm*.

The gnome, proud of his new treasure, at once put on his wishing-cap, and changed himself into a dragon; and then, at the request of the cunning Loki, he unsuspectingly took on the form of a toad. However, no sooner did the toad appear, than the gods instantly seized it, and binding their captive securely, they triumphantly bore him off to Wotan's mountain side.

Here Alberic, though he had quickly regained his own shape, found himself a prisoner indeed, his precious *Tarnhelm* having been put out of his reach, and the exultant gods refused to set him free until he had agreed to yield up all his mighty treasures. So the wretched dwarf, in order

to gain his freedom, was compelled to call upon his gnome-subjects to bring forth the precious hoards they had laid up for him, and to pile them in a heap upon the mountain side.

When the Tarnhelm had been added to the glittering heap of gold and gems, Alberic entreated to be allowed to retain the magic Ring, and upon the request being refused, he passionately laid a curse upon the circlet, declaring that it should bring disaster and death upon every person who should afterwards own it. But in spite of the curse, the Ring was snatched from his finger by Wotan, and then, on being set free, the hapless gnome, robbed of his power, fled back to his own land, vanishing through a cleft in the rock.

A concourse of gods and goddesses had now arrived upon the scene, and presently the giants, Fasolt and Fafnir, also arrived to claim their wages, bringing their hostage with them. At first Wotan also endeavoured to retain the Ring for himself; but the gods refused to yield Freia until they possessed this wonderful talisman as well as the other treasures. Then Erda, the wise goddess of Earth, rose slowly from the ground, and warned the great god that disaster was in store for him the longer he held the now fatal talisman; and at last, overcome by this warning, Wotan tore the Ring from his finger, and flung it upon the treasure-heap.

The giants now took possession of their

prize, and upon Freia being set at liberty, all the gods at once regained their pristine youth and strength.

But Alberic's curse had not been a vain one, and no sooner did the giants obtain their treasure than they began to quarrel as to which should have the Ring; and in the fight that quickly ensued, Fasolt was killed. Fafnir, the survivor, then secured the mighty hoard, together with the Ring and Tarnhelm, and retired to a certain gloomy cave in a wild deserted spot; and here, in the form of a huge, fiery dragon, he guarded the prize he had won.

Wotan, over-awed at this immediate proof of the terrible power of Alberic's curse, began to wonder how he could preserve himself and all the gods descended from him; for he, also, had owned the fatal Ring for a time, and, god though he was, his powers were limited. Even when Fricka reminded him that the dazzling abode, Valhalla, was still left to him as a Castle of Refuge, he was little comforted, knowing that it had been obtained at a shameful price that would at length bring about the destruction of the gods, since he, their All-Father, could not escape the curse laid upon him; but he agreed to take possession of the castle.

Since the glittering mansion was separated from them by the great yawning valley of the Rhine, Donner, the god of Thunder, came forward to their aid; and first clearing the cloud-laden, misty air by means of a thunder-

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storm, he set up a dazzling rainbow-bridge from one mountain top to the other.

It completely spanned the valley; and upon this beautiful arch of radiant light, the gods passed over to take possession of the glorious halls of Valhalla.

THE NIBELUNG'S RING

PART II

THE VALKYRIE

ONE wild and stormy evening, a noble warrior - hero, named Siegmund, flying weaponless and shieldless through a dark forest, sought refuge from his pursuing enemies in the first lonely homestead he came to, and opening the door with eager haste, he unceremoniously stepped within.

He found himself in a strange-looking room; for the house was built around a mighty ash-tree, the huge trunk of which stood as a pillar in the centre. Finding that the room was empty, Siegmund strode forward to the hearth, and being utterly exhausted by his late exertions and flight, he stretched himself upon a bear-skin before the fire, and sank into a sweet, refreshing slumber.

Soon afterwards, there came forth from an inner chamber a beautiful but sad-looking maiden—Sieglinde, the mistress of this curious

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dwelling-place—and full of surprise at seeing a stranger lying upon the hearth, she called to him in a low tone.

The sound of the maiden's sweet voice aroused Siegmund, and raising his head, he asked for a drink. Sieglinde quickly filled a drinking-horn with water, and handed it to the warrior, who drank thirstily; and then, as Siegmund gazed upon the fair beauty of his benefactress, a thrill of delight passed through him, and he asked who it was who thus restored him to life.

Sieglinde, through whose veins an answering thrill had also sped, replied that she was the wife of Hunding, a warrior, in whose house he had found shelter; and to show that he was welcome there, she fetched him a horn of foaming mead, and begged him to drink again. When Siegmund returned the horn, their eyes met in a long, passionate gaze; for love had suddenly entered their hearts, and both felt that their fates would be for ever intertwined.

As they talked together there was a quick step outside, and next moment Hunding, the warrior, entered the room. He was of a fierce, stern, and gloomy countenance, and as his eyes fell upon the stranger standing beside his hearth, a dark scowl swept over his brow. Sieglinde explained in a trembling voice that the stranger had sought shelter in their house, and that she had given him refreshment; and then, extending a somewhat tardy welcome to his guest, Hunding

doffed his weapons and bade his wife spread supper for them.

When the three were seated at the table, Hunding curtly demanded his guest's name and history; and Siegmund replied sadly that he was known to the world as "Woeful," owing to his misfortunes, and that he and a beloved twin-sister had been born to a famous hero. One evening, when Woeful was still but a child, on returning from a forest hunt with his father, a terrible sight had met their eyes; for their home had been burnt and laid waste by enemies, the beautiful mother lay dead, and no trace whatever remained of the tender little maid who had been the sunshine of their lives. Some years later, the warlike hero also suddenly disappeared, and then his unhappy son was left to struggle as best he could with the ill-luck that had followed him all his life. That evening, on passing through the forest, he had rushed to the aid of a poor maiden, whose kinsmen were seeking to wed her to a churl whom she abhorred; but being overwhelmed and disarmed by the fierce tyrants, he had been compelled to flee for his life, and take refuge in the first homestead he came to.

On hearing this last part of the story, Hunding's brow grew dark, and he declared with suppressed anger that they were his kinsfolk whom Woeful had attacked, adding that he himself had been called to their aid, but arriving too late to be of assistance.

had returned to his house, only to find the flying foe upon his own hearth.

Siegmund, seeing that he had thus unwittingly sought shelter in the abode of an enemy, felt that his last hour had come, since he had no weapons for his defence; but Hunding, being bound by the laws of hospitality not to harm his guest till the morrow, declared that he was safe for that night, but should die with morning light.

He then bade his wife prepare his evening draught, and retire for the night; but as Sieglinde moved towards the inner chamber, she threw a tender, sympathising glance upon the despondent Siegmund. Then Hunding, having seen that the door was fastened, took up his weapons with a triumphant look at his doomed guest, and also departed to the sleeping-chamber; and Siegmund, left alone, sank upon the hearth with troubled thoughts.

Presently, as he lay gazing into the dying embers of the fire, the door of the inner chamber was softly opened, and the beautiful Sieglinde came towards him in haste, declaring that he might now depart in safety, since Hunding lay wrapped in helpless slumber, she having mixed a narcotic with his evening draught. She added that a wonderful weapon also lay ready to his hand, and then, returning the tender glance bestowed upon her by Siegmund, she began to tell him a strange story.

On the day she was wedded to Hunding against her will, having been forced to the

deed by fierce ravishers who had stolen her from her home in early childhood, a stranger, wrapped in a dark cloak, had suddenly entered this very hall, and plunging a shining sword deep down to the hilt in the ash-tree's stem, he had declared that it possessed magic qualities, and should become the prize of whichever hero could pluck it forth. All the warriors at the festive board had tried to wrench the sword from its sheath, but in vain; and Sieglinde added that she knew by the kindly glance bestowed upon her by the stranger, whose features had reminded her of the father she had been stolen from, that the magic weapon was reserved for some brave hero who should one day come to offer her his love and help, and who, her heart whispered, now stood before her.

These words filled Siegmund with an intoxication of joy, and no longer able to quell the love that already surged in his heart, he clasped the beautiful maiden in his arms with rapture. But as Sieglinde gazed upon her beloved, his features and glances suddenly reminded her of the stranger who had plunged the sword in the tree; and on learning from Siegmund that his father had been known as Volsung, she exclaimed that that was the name of her own father, whose features had been reflected in those of the stranger who had appeared on her wedding morn.

Siegmund, quickly realising that it was his long-lost twin-sister who stood before

him, and whose love he had won, embraced her with even greater joy than before; and knowing now that his mysterious father, Volsung, had placed the sword in the ash-tree to be plucked thence by his own son only, he hastened to the mighty tree and triumphantly drew the weapon forth, announcing its name to be "Needful." Then the enraptured lovers, hand locked in hand, rushed forth joyously into the sweet spring night, and hastening with glad footsteps through the moonlit forest, they sought a place of refuge from the vengeance of Hunding, who, they knew, would follow them on awakening from the effects of the narcotic.

Now Siegmund and Sieglinde, though they knew it not, were in reality the twin-children of the great god Wotan, who, in the guise of the hero Volsung, had wooed and won a beautiful maiden of the earth; and from the first, naught but misery had fallen to the lot of the ill-fated pair.

As soon as Wotan's celestial wife, Fricka, the goddess of Marriage and upholder of conjugal bonds, knew of the unholy love of Siegmund and Sieglinde, and of their flight from Hunding, she was filled with indignation, and summoning her roving and inconstant husband, she poured forth angry reproaches upon him for countenancing this violation of her laws. She demanded that the recreant lovers should be overtaken and punished, and that Siegmund's magic sword

should be broken ; and knowing that Wotan had already despatched one of his attendant war-maidens, the beautiful Valkyrie, Brynhildr, to assist his son against the pursuing Hunding, she bade him instantly recall her.

It was in vain that Wotan, who really loved his earth-born children, pleaded for the unhappy lovers, and the angry goddess gave him no peace until he promised to cause Siegmund to be vanquished by his avenger.

So the great god reluctantly called back the Valkyrie, Brynhildr, and when the beautiful war-maiden appeared before him, clad in dazzling mail, fully armed and mounted on a fiery celestial steed, he sadly commanded her to give assistance to the wronged Hunding, instead of to Siegmund, as he had at first bade her. Brynhildr, who knew that Wotan still longed to help his son, went forth upon her mission with a heavy heart, and soon she came up with the fleeing lovers.

After wandering onwards for many days, only stopping for necessary rest, Siegmund and his stolen bride had at length come to a wild, rocky height ; but even here they did not feel safe, for they knew that Hunding was quickly following on their track. But Sieglinde was so much exhausted by her long journey that she could go no further, and sinking upon a sheltering ledge, she presently fell into a troubled sleep.

As Siegmund watched beside the sleeping

form of his beloved one, he suddenly beheld the dazzling figure of the beautiful war-maiden, Brynhildr, and knowing that the Valkyries only appeared to heroes doomed to fall in battle, he asked in trembling tones whom she sought. Brynhildr answered solemnly that she had come to bear him, Siegmund the Völsung, hence with her to Valhalla, at the command of Wotan; but when Siegmund eagerly asked if Sieglinde would accompany him there, she replied that the maiden must remain on earth.

Then Siegmund passionately declared that he would forego all the celestial glories of Valhalla if he might not share them with his beloved one; adding that with his magic sword, Needful, he would gain the victory in the approaching fight, and thus defeat Wotan of his prey.

Now when Brynhildr saw what a passionate love it was that bound these two young hearts, she was filled with tender pity, and at last, after a short struggle with herself, she resolved to disobey the command of Wotan, and give her assistance to the lovers, instead of to their enemy.

Presently the young warrior heard the sound of horn-calls coming nearer and nearer, and soon afterwards Hunding came in sight. A violent thunderstorm now began to rage, and the sombre gloom of the wild scene was constantly illumined by the awful glare of lightning; but, heedless of the warring elements, Siegmund dashed forward

to meet the vengeful Hunding as he appeared on the craggy height, and quickly clashed swords with him.

The noise of the storm awakened Sieglinde, and she uttered a shriek of terror as a brilliant flash of lightning revealed to her the furiously fighting forms of Hunding and Siegmund, with the Valkyrie, Brynhildr, soaring defensively over the latter, guarding him with her shield. But at this moment there was an unexpected interruption; for Wotan himself, enraged by the Valkyrie's disobedience to his will, and bound by his oath to his celestial spouse, suddenly swooped down upon the combatants, with anger in his mien.

Terrified at this awful apparition of the all-powerful god Brynhildr retreated before him; and as she did so, Siegmund's magic sword broke upon the outstretched mighty spear of Wotan, leaving him thus the prey of the triumphant Hunding, who quickly buried his weapon in the defenceless breast of his enemy.

As her vanquished lover uttered his last dying gasp, Sieglinde sank senseless to the ground; but Brynhildr snatched her up instantly, and mounting her fiery steed that stood waiting near, she rode wildly away with her prize.

For a few moments Wotan gazed down sorrowfully upon the prostrate form of the hero-son he would so gladly have saved; and then, in a terrible outburst of wrath

and grief, he killed the conquering Hunding, and disappeared on the wings of the storm in pursuit of the flying Brynhildr.

The beautiful war-maiden rode at desperate speed; but, after travelling an immense distance, her noble steed at last fell exhausted at the top of a high rocky mountain. Upon the summit of this mountain, a band of mounted Valkyries in full armour had gathered to rest on their way to Valhalla, each with the dead body of a fallen warrior lying across her saddle-bag; and to these war-maidens, her sisters, Brynhildr hastened to beg assistance, bearing Sieglinde with her.

She quickly told them her story, and begged for a horse to continue her flight; but when the Valkyries knew that she was flying from the wrath of their beloved All-Father, they refused to give her aid, fearing lest Wotan's anger should fall upon them also, if they protected one who had disobeyed him.

Seeing that she could thus no longer protect the now conscious Sieglinde, Brynhildr bade her fly onward alone, towards a certain forest ever shunned by Wotan; and when the poor maiden declared that she no longer desired to live, the inspired Valkyrie earnestly besought her not to despair, since she should become the mother of the greatest hero of the world, who should be called Siegfried. At the same time, she placed in her hands

the broken pieces of Siegmund's magic sword, which she had seized as he fell to the ground; and she desired Sieglinde to keep the fragments for her son, who should forge them once more into a weapon of wondrous power.

Comforted, and filled with joy on hearing this prophecy, Sieglinde, no longer despairing, was eager to save herself from harm, and bestowing a grateful blessing upon her self-sacrificing protector, she quickly rushed away towards the gloomy forest indicated.

Amidst appalling thunder and lightning, Wotan now appeared upon the mountain top, and as Brynhildr stood humbly before him, with downcast mien, the angry god declared that for her disobedience to him, she should be a Valkyrie no longer, and that, deprived of divinity and the sweet joys of Valhalla, she should be doomed to lie in an enchanted sleep, for the first passing churl to awaken and call his own.

On hearing her terrible sentence, Brynhildr sank upon her knees, and with a despairing cry, she implored the All-Father not to leave her to become the prey of any mere braggart, but to place a circle of fire around the rock upon which she must lie in charmed sleep, that she might at least not be awakened by any but a hero valiant enough to brave the flames to gain her.

For some time Wotan refused to grant her

plea, but at last he yielded, overcome by the tenderness he still felt for her, for Brynhildr had ever been the best beloved of all his war-maidens. He declared that he would call forth such fiery flames to protect her slumbers as should scare away all timid cravens, and that only one who had never known fear should awaken her—the greatest hero of the world ; and Brynhildr was filled with joy and gratitude, knowing that this mighty feat was reserved for the yet unborn hero-son of Siegmund and Sieglinde.

Wotan now gently kissed the beautiful Valkyrie upon both eyes, which instantly closed in slumber ; and bearing her tenderly in his arms, he laid her upon a low moss-covered rock, covering her graceful mail-clad form with the long shield she had borne so bravely. Then, striking the rock three times with his spear, he uttered an invocation to the god Loki to come to his aid, and out leapt a stream of fiery flames, which quickly surrounded the mountain top ; and with a last long look of affection at the sleeping maiden, the god returned to his celestial abode.

But the fair Brynhildr lay wrapped in peaceful slumber upon her fire-encircled couch, and though many bold travellers longed to possess the lovely maiden, none were found willing to brave the scorching flames—a deed that awaited the coming of the world's greatest hero, Siegfried the Fearless.

THE NIBELUNG'S RING

PART III

SIEGFRIED

MIME the Nibelung stood working at his forge one summer day in the gloomy forest cavern that served him as a dwelling-place; and as he hammered at a fine long sword he had laid upon the anvil, he was filled with despondency, knowing that, in spite of all his skill in forging, he could not make a sword that would not be splintered at the first mighty stroke of the noble youth for whom it was intended.

For Mime, though but a hideous gnome of evil disposition, and full of guile, had been the means of preserving the precious infant life of Siegfried, the promised hero-son of Siegmund and Sieglinde; and he had nourished him with great care, knowing that this child was destined, in years to come, to slay Fafnir, the giant dragon that guarded the mighty treasure of his Nibelung brother, Alberic.

He cunningly hoped by means of Siegfried

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to obtain this coveted treasure for himself, and so he kept the child ignorant of the secret of the Rhine Gold, and of his own high birth. As Siegfried grew to manhood, he had no knowledge of his true parentage, though he utterly refused to regard Mime as his father; for in spite of his protecting care, he hated the dwarf, feeling unconsciously that he had only preserved him for his own evil ends.

Mime knew this, and feared him accordingly; and as he now stood working at his forge this summer day, he trembled as he thought of the youth's wonderful strength, for every sword he had yet made for him, Siegfried had only contemptuously snapped in half.

Just as he finished the sword, Siegfried himself dashed boisterously into the cave, leading by a leash a great bear he had caught in the forest; for fear was unknown to the hero-son of Sieglinde, and savage beasts he but regarded as his play-fellows.

He was a noble-looking youth of dazzling beauty, mighty strength, and dauntless courage as befitted a descendant of the great god, Wotan, and his contempt for the puny Mime was quickly shown by the careless manner in which, in mere wanton mischief, he drove the fierce bear round the cave after the wretched gnome, who shrank back in abject fear.

At last, having laughingly driven the growling beast back to the forest, Siegfried

returned, and demanded the new sword he had bidden Mime forge for him; and the dwarf timidly handed him the blade he had just finished, which would have been regarded as a mighty weapon by any ordinary mortal.

But Siegfried laughed derisively as he took up the sword to test its strength, and striking it but once upon the anvil, the steel immediately shattered to pieces.

To stem the torrent of wrath that now burst upon him, Mime whiningly implored Siegfried to remember the loving care he had ever shown for him since infancy; but the youth declared that he hated the sight of the gnome, and despised the pretended love he professed for him, since he knew him to be at heart false and evil.

He then demanded to be told who were his parents, and how he came to be left in the charge of a puny dwarf; and Mime, terrified at the authoritative flash in the eyes of Siegfried, and not daring to deceive him longer, told him in trembling tones all that he knew. He said that he had found in the forest one day a beautiful woman, named Sieglinde, who lay in tears and deep suffering, and carrying her to his cave, he had tended her with care. She gave birth to a child during the night, and dying almost immediately afterwards, she had left the babe to the care of Mime, bidding him call her son by the name of Siegfried.

Filled with emotion as he listened to this sad story, Siegfried next demanded some

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proof of its truth, and very reluctantly Mime presently produced the pieces of a broken sword, which he said the dying woman had also left in his charge for her son, whose hero-father, she declared, had used it in his last fight. Overjoyed at the possession of this great treasure, which proved that his father had been a noble warrior, Siegfried now commanded Mime to forge the pieces afresh into a mighty sword once more, and enthusiastically declaring that with his father's weapon he would win himself renown, he rushed forth into the forest to tell his joy to the birds and beasts he loved so well.

But Mime was left in despair; for though he had many times in secret tried to weld the broken pieces of the magic sword, Needless, he had never yet succeeded, and knew it was beyond his skill to do so.

As the dwarf stood despondently at his anvil, a stranger, wrapped in a dark mantle, suddenly entered the cave and sat down to rest by the hearth; and though he called himself a Wanderer, Mime soon learnt to his terror, from the stranger's huge spear causing thunder to mutter as it struck the ground, that it was in reality the great god Wotan who had thus invaded his dwelling.

Although ill-received by the dwarf, the Wanderer calmly kept his seat; and in the course of conversation, he announced that Mime should fall a prey to the just wrath of one who had never known fear, and who

alone possessed the power to forge the mighty sword, Needful.

With these ominous words the stranger vanished, and as Mime shrank back to his forge, trembling, Siegfried returned from the forest, and demanded his sword. The dwarf declared that he had not skill enough to forge the broken blade, and he added that it could only be restored by one who had never felt fear.

Upon Siegfried eagerly demanding what this fear was, Mime tried to describe the feeling to him, and the youth declared that he had no knowledge of such tremblings, but was curious to experience them. Then Mime craftily remarked that he knew of a terrible giant dragon, named Fafnir, who would quickly teach him what fearing was; and Siegfried exclaimed impetuously that the dwarf should conduct him to this monster without delay.

He then took up the fragments of the magic sword, declaring that he alone, who knew not fear, would restore the weapon; and filing down the steel, he melted it in a crucible, and began to forge it afresh. Amidst the roaring of the bellows and the clang of the falling hammer, Mime sat lost in meditation, wondering how he could turn the youth's power to his own purposes; and at last an evil idea flashed across his brain.

He would let the hero slay the dragon and even secure the treasure, and then, when exhausted by his exertions, he would offer him a cooling draught containing a deadly

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poison, which should instantly cause his death, and the great prize would thus fall into the hands of Mime the Nibelung.

Siegfried had now fashioned his sword, and was singing gleefully as he hammered it on the anvil, calling it lovingly by name, and finishing it off with wondrous skill ; and by the time the gnome had brewed his fatal draught, the magic blade, Needful, was completely restored.

With a loud shout of joy Siegfried seized the mighty weapon, and struck it with all his force upon the anvil to test its strength ; and the blow was so great that the anvil split from top to bottom, and fell asunder with a terrific crash.

But Needful remained bright and unscratched, and swinging the wonderful sword exultingly over his head, Siegfried rushed out of the cave, calling on the awed and shrinking Mime to lead him to the dragon's den. The dwarf, quickly recovering himself, and remembering the prize in store for him, took up the horn containing the fatal draught he had brewed, and joining Siegfried immediately, he led him unerringly through the forest to the wild spot where Fafnir's cave was situated.

Here Alberic the Nibelung had been awaiting the dragon's death for many years, and having learnt this very day from Wotan, the Wanderer, of the near approach of Siegfried, he had slipped back into a rocky cleft to watch what happened.

Soon afterwards, Siegfried and Mime came

forth from the forest, but the timid dwarf did not dare to remain long near the cave, and quickly departed to hide, after telling the youth that the dragon would soon appear. The young hero presently blew a long, loud blast upon his hunting-horn, and almost immediately afterwards, the terrible giant dragon, Fafnir, came out from his cave, demanding who summoned him.

Siegfried stared at the great beast in amazement, but not a single spark of alarm was in his brave heart as he boldly announced that he had come to learn what fearing was. Fafnir replied that he was overbold, since he should now serve him as food; but upon this, Siegfried, having no mind to provide a meal for the unwieldy creature, though fearless still, drew his sword, Needful, and smilingly sprang forward to meet his enemy.

With fire and poisonous fumes issuing from his nostrils, the dragon rushed upon him, but as it raised its huge body, Siegfried dashed boldly beneath the gaping jaws, and buried his sword in the monster's breast.

As the dragon rolled over, dead, Siegfried drew his sword triumphantly from its body, but in so doing, he accidentally tasted the creature's blood. Suddenly he discovered, to his joy, that he could now understand the language of the birds around him, and being especially attracted by the notes of a pretty wood-bird, he went nearer to listen to what it had to say. The wood-bird told him to

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enter the cave, and possess himself of the dragon's treasure, adding that if only he gained the Tarnhelm and magic Ring, he could make himself lord of the whole world.

Full of joy, Siegfried rushed into the cave, and at that moment Mime and Alberic came forth from opposite directions, scowling with surprise and anger as they recognised each other. They instantly began to quarrel as to which should have the treasure, but when Siegfried presently issued from the cave, with the Ring on his finger and the wishing-cap tucked into his belt, Alberic departed, content to let his curse take effect upon the spoiler.

As Siegfried passed under the trees, the wood-bird again spoke to him : and this time his feathered friend warned him that Mime was his enemy, and meant to poison him in order to obtain the treasures he had won. The youth, having always suspected the dwarf of evil intentions, was thus put upon his guard, and when Mime presently drew near with insinuating smile, and pleasantly offered him the horn of poison as a "cooling drink," he instantly plunged his sword into the traitor's heart.

As the crafty dwarf fell dead at his feet, the wood-bird spoke yet once again, and in sweet, thrilling tones, it now told him of a glorious bride whom he might win—the beautiful fallen Valkyrie, Brynhildr, who still slept upon her rocky fastness, surrounded by fire, and waiting for the one fearless hero of the world to brave the flames and possess her.

Filled with rapture at the thought that the joys of love might thus be his, Siegfried eagerly desired to know in which direction so fair a prize lay, and for answer, the pretty wood-bird spread its wings and fluttered along in front to show him the way. Through miles and miles of forest depths the feathered guide flew without resting, and then, when night had passed and the rosy dawn appeared, it suddenly vanished, and Siegfried, finding himself at the foot of a wild mountain, the rocky top of which was encircled by fire, knew that he had arrived at his goal.

But as he approached the mountain side his path was suddenly blocked by a stranger. This was none other than Wotan, the Wanderer, who still roamed the world, conscious of his approaching doom, which should be brought nearer by this same radiant Volsung youth, and who, having vainly sought advice from the wise goddess Erda, now half-heartedly hoped to oppose the hero himself.

Seeing a stranger barring his path with extended spear, Siegfried drew his magic blade, Needful, and with a mighty stroke he hewed the spear in two pieces, upon which a blinding flash of lightning rent the air, followed by a loud crash of thunder. Knowing now that it was useless to withstand this hero-youth who had thus destroyed his weapon of power, Wotan vanished in a cloud of darkness, and retreating in despair to Valhalla, he there awaited the Dusk of

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the Gods, which he knew was now quickly approaching, since he, the mightiest of them all, had been defeated.

But Siegfried, free to pursue his way once more, dashed joyfully up the mountain side, and plunging fearlessly through the fierce encircling flames, he reached the rock beyond in safety. Here the Valkyrie, Brynhildr, still lay peacefully slumbering, and gently removing her protecting shield and helmet, Siegfried, entranced, stood gazing in breathless silence upon her dazzling loveliness. A passionate love surged up in his quickly-beating heart, and kneeling beside the fair maiden, he pressed a tender kiss upon her lips.

Instantly Brynhildr opened her beautiful eyes, and rising from her rocky couch she greeted Siegfried with joy, telling him that she had loved him all through her charmed sleep, knowing that he alone should awaken her to life once more.

Then Siegfried, enraptured, clasped her in his arms, entreating her to accept his love, and though Brynhildr at first shrank back, offended at the touch of a mortal, she could not long fight against the answering passion awakened in her own breast. Remembering that her divinity was now lost for ever, she placed her hand in Siegfried's with joy, and as the hero held his beautiful bride in his arms, he felt that the dark night-time of his early years had at last dawned into a glorious day-time of light and joy.

THE NIBELUNG'S RING

PART IV

THE DUSK OF THE GODS

WHEN night-time fell, after the meeting of Brynhildr and Siegfried, the three Nornir, or Fates, appeared on the Valkyrie's fire-encircled rock, and crouching amidst the rugged stones, they began to sing as they spun their golden cord of the runes of Destiny.

But although the radiant lovers slumbered sweetly in a neighbouring cave, and all the world around seemed calm and peaceful, the weird song of the three dread Sisters was full of gloom and sadness; for they knew that, owing to the fatal power of the Nibelung's curse, disaster was about to fall, not only upon these lovers, but also upon the dwellers in Asgard, whose doom was quickly approaching.

Suddenly, as they sang, their rope of Destiny broke asunder, and with wild, despairing cries the three Nornir disappeared,

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knowing now that the Dusk of the Gods would soon begin.

The night wore on, and when day-light appeared the lovers issued from the cave: Siegfried, in full armour, with his mighty sword girdled about him, and Brynhildr leading her horse by its bridle. For the beautiful Valkyrie would not keep her hero, dearly though she loved him, from gaining glory and honour in the world, and Siegfried, having already learned much of her divine wisdom, was now about to set forth in search of fresh exploits and adventures.

For a parting gift to his love, Siegfried placed his magic Ring upon Brynhildr's finger as the sign of their troth, as yet knowing naught of its fatal power; and Brynhildr, in return, bestowed upon him her noble horse, Grani. The lovers swore to be true to each other, and then, after a passionate farewell, they parted.

After many wanderings, Siegfried, following the course of the Rhine, came to the Hall of the Gibichungs, or Burgundian tribe. Here a powerful king, named Gunther, reigned, and with him lived his beautiful sister, Gudrun, and their half-brother, Hagen, whose father was none other than the wretched gnome, Alberic.

Now, Hagen, though so keen-witted as to be the chosen adviser of his royal half-brother, had also inherited the evil qualities and greed of his gnome-father, and hearing of the approach of the hero, Siegfried, whose

wonderful exploits were by this time world-renowned, he laid a cunning plan, by means of which the Gibichungs might win, or at least share, the fearless one's power and wealth.

Relating the story of the fire-encircled Valkyrie, he pointed out to Gunther that Brynhildr would make him a radiant bride, and then, if Gudrun were also wed to Siegfried, they would secure the Nibelung's treasure, which would gain them the mastery of the whole world. He suggested that in order to carry out this plan they should give Siegfried, on his arrival, a magic draught they possessed, by means of which he should forget his love for Byrnhildr, and conceive a passion for Gudrun; and Gunther and his sister, being dazzled at the prospect of being so nobly mated, gladly agreed to the scheme, whilst Hagen, cunningly keeping back his knowledge of Brynhildr's and Siegfried's vows of love, rejoiced, because of the opportunity that would occur for securing the treasure he coveted.

So when Siegfried arrived in the Gibichungs' land he was met on the banks of the Rhine by Hagen, and conducted at once to the royal Hall; and here he received a joyous welcome from King Gunther and his fair sister.

Siegfried was greatly pleased with his kindly welcome, and when Gudrun presently offered him a well-filled drinking-horn, in token of friendship and hospitality, he gladly

drank off its contents to the health of his beloved Brynhildr.

But the magic love - potion had been mingled with the draught, and no sooner had he set down the horn, than the likeness of Brynhildr faded from his mind, and all memory of his love for her became a blank. It seemed to him that the fair Gudrun was the first maiden he had ever beheld, and a passionate desire to possess her suddenly grew up within him.

Gudrun beheld his ardent glances with great joy, for an answering love had quickly sprung up in her own heart for the noble hero before her. Taking her willing hand in his, Siegfried led the maiden, who now possessed his whole heart, to her royal brother, and eagerly requested her hand in marriage; and to this Gunther gave his consent on condition that the Valkyrie, Brynhildr, was secured as a bride for himself. Siegfried gladly agreed to go through the fire once more, and woo Brynhildr for his new friend; and when the two had sworn an oath of brotherhood, they set out together, to begin their enterprise at once.

In a royal barque they sailed down the Rhine a certain distance, and then when the Valkyrie's rock came in sight, Siegfried bade Gunther remain in the boat, whilst he himself went forward alone to climb the mountain. By means of his Tarnhelm, or wishing-cap, he took on the form and appearance of Gunther—the two having agreed that the

marital maiden must be wooed and won by Siegfried in the likeness of the king—and promising to be loyal and faithful to his oath, the young hero began to climb the rocky height.

Brynhildr had just received a visit from her Valkyrie sister, Valtrauta, who had come to entreat her to restore the Nibelung's fatal Ring to the Rhine nymphs once more, as the only remaining hope of saving the dwellers in Asgard; for Wotan had now gathered the gods together in Valhalla—around which he had caused to be piled a forest of faggots from the world's ash-tree, hewn down at his command—and all were silently and sadly awaiting their approaching doom, the dreaded Twilight, that meant for them destruction. The only glimpse of hope now left was for the mighty Ring to be returned to the Rhine, when its curse upon men and gods would become void; and on learning this from the beloved All-Father, Valtrauta had mounted her war-horse and flown at once to her fallen sister, who she knew possessed the Ring.

But Brynhildr, cut off as she was from the joys of Valhalla, would not part with her love-token, which was more precious to her than all the dwellers in Asgard, and in spite of the passionate entreaties of Valtrauta, she utterly refused to give up the Ring.

Finding that her pleading was in vain, the despairing Valkyrie was compelled to depart, and no sooner had she gone, than Siegfried, in the form and garb of Gunther, sprang

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fearlessly through the zone of fire, and advancing towards Brynhildr, whom he regarded as a stranger, announced calmly, in a disguised voice, that having braved the flames he had come to possess her as a bride.

Full of horror at being thus wooed by a stranger during the absence of her hero-lover, Brynhildr shrank back, and indignantly refused to yield herself to this bold intruder, receiving strength from her magic Ring ; but upon her talisman being wrested from her by the superior force of Siegfried, she became powerless, and was compelled to submit to his will. Siegfried now led her to the cave as their bridal chamber, but, mindful of his oath and loyalty to Gunther, whose wooing he had so strangely undertaken, he laid his sword, Needful, between them.

Next day, at dawn, the disguised Siegfried took the bride he had won for another by the hand, and led her safely through the flames and down the mountain side, and on being met at the river side by Gunther, he instantly vanished by means of his Tarnhelm, and transported himself to the Gibichungs' Hall. So when the true Gunther took her by the hand, Brynhildr regarded him as her wooer of the night before, and the pair entered the barque.

Now, during the absence of Gunther and Siegfried, Hagen had been visited in a vision by his gnome-father, Alberic, who besought him to quickly seek an opportunity to kill Siegfried, and so secure from him the magic

Ring, by means of which the Nibelung might regain his lost power; and Hagen gladly agreed to use his craft for this purpose.

When Gunther returned with Brynhildr to the Gibichungs' Hall, great preparations were made to celebrate the two marriages in splendid state, and all the vassals and warriors quickly assembled to join in the revels.

All this time Brynhildr had remained submissive and downcast, but now, on entering the Hall with Gunther and finding herself confronted by Siegfried, who led Gudrun by the hand, she started violently and gazed on him with utter astonishment. Suddenly observing the magic Ring upon his finger, the true identity of the bold wooer who had intruded upon her rocky fastness flashed across her mind, and, full of furious anger at the discovery, she announced to all the company that she had been betrayed, and that Siegfried, in his wooing of her in disguise, had dishonoured their King.

Siegfried fearlessly defended himself, declaring that he had been loyal to his trust; but his explanations were designedly confounded by Hagen, who, for his own evil purposes, used his cunning wit to persuade all that the great hero had indeed acted as a base traitor.

Siegfried, however, having a clear conscience, still declared his innocence, and taking the hand of Gudrun, whom he now loved passionately owing to the effect of the love-potion,

he led her gaily to join in the revels, followed by most of the company.

But Brynhildr and Gunther remained in their places, overcome with indignation, still believing Siegfried to be false; and seeing them alone, Hagen joined them, and with cunning words strengthened their suspicions and persuaded them that it was their duty to avenge themselves for the ill that had been done them. He at last obtained their consent to the murder of Siegfried, which he agreed to carry out himself at a hunting party next day; and having arranged this, they rejoined the revellers, and the wedding rejoicings went forward once more.

Next day, a grand royal hunt was organised, and Siegfried, in eager pursuit of prey, found himself at one time alone on the bank of the river. As he stood there a moment, gazing into the water, the three lovely Rhine maidens, Flosshildr, Woglinda, and Wellgunda, swam towards the shore and gave him glad greeting, knowing that this was the great hero who now possessed their long-lost treasure, and in coaxing tones they entreated him to restore the magic Ring to them.

Siegfried, however, refused to listen to their pleadings, even when the nymphs told him that if he retained it longer, the talisman would quickly bring death upon him; and as the Rhine maidens swam away disconsolately, he laughed aloud at their warning.

At that moment, Gunther, Hagen, and the rest of the hunting party joined him, and sitting down to rest upon the river bank, the huntsmen began to feast and make merry together. To amuse his new friends, Siegfried began to tell them the story of his life and adventures; but just as he was relating how he had scaled the fire-encircled mountain, Hagen crept softly forward and suddenly stabbed him in the back with his hunting-spear, announcing to the dismayed onlookers that the deed was done in retribution for the hero's betrayal of their King.

Siegfried sank to the ground immediately; and the effect of the magic potion of forgetfulness waning as his life-blood welled forth, all his old love for the beautiful Valkyrie he had so innocently betrayed returned to bless his last moments, and with Brynhildr's name upon his lips, he died.

The dead hero's body was quickly borne back to the royal Hall, and when the fair Gudrun beheld the lifeless form of her husband of a day, she fell senseless to the ground, overcome by despair.

Hagen and Gunther now began to quarrel as to which should possess the magic Ring, and in the furious fight that ensued Gunther was killed.

Loud cries of woe quickly arose, and in the dismay and confusion that followed, Brynhildr hastened forward. At sight of the dead Siegfried, she was filled with utmost grief,

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and learning from the reviving and sorrowing Gudrun of his innocence, and remembering naught but her passionate love for him, she firmly resolved to perish with her hero.

In a commanding tone none dared to disobey she silenced the noise and confusion around her, and bade the warriors to instantly build up a funeral pyre upon the banks of the Rhine; and when this had been done, the dead body of Siegfried was laid upon it. She then tenderly placed his magic Ring upon her finger, and seizing a lighted torch, she set the faggots ablaze.

She now understood that through her alone the sin of the great All-Father must be atoned for, and that by her sacrifice of Love, the world should be redeemed. The curse of the Ring would also be removed by her death, for with her ashes the fatal Gold would be restored to the Rhine.

Thus nobly resolving to sacrifice herself, she desired two Ravens hovering near—the messengers of Wotan—to return to the great god so sadly awaiting his end, and announce to him that his destiny was about to be fulfilled; and also to bid the god Loki, who still guarded the rock upon which she had lain in a charmed sleep, to depart with his fire to Valhalla.

She then mounted her faithful steed, Grani, and as the flames sprang brightly upwards, she leaped with him into the midst of the burning pyre, and perished beside the corpse of her hero-lover. As the flames died away,

the river suddenly rose, and overflowing its banks, covered the remains of the funeral pile; and at the same moment, the three Rhine nymphs swam up to secure their Gold.

Hagen made a last frantic effort to reach the talisman by plunging into the flood, but being seized by the nymphs, he was dragged beneath the waves and drowned.

So the Rhine maidens at last regained their precious treasure, and the curse of the Ring was removed; but the dwellers in Asgard were doomed, for Loki had already accomplished his mission.

Suddenly a fiery, crimson glow appeared in the heavens, ever spreading and increasing to a dazzling brilliancy, and as the warriors and mourners gazed with awe upon this wondrous sight, they saw that Valhalla, with all its glorious array of gods and heroes, was already engulfed in an ocean of leaping flames.

The Dusk of the Gods had come!



VERDI

IL TROVATORE, OR, THE GIPSY'S VENGEANCE

DURING the Middle Ages there lived, in the kingdom of Arragon—one of the powerful divisions of Spain—a proud nobleman, known as the Count de Luna, whose two young sons were the joy and pride of his heart.

The Count loved his children so dearly that he could not bear to think of ill befalling them, and so, when he was told one day that the youngest child, who was still but a babe, had suddenly fallen sick, he was much alarmed, although the ailment was only a trifling one.

Thus it happened that when darkness fell the devoted nurse of this high-born babe was bidden to keep watch over her charge throughout the night; and when the anxious Count and his household had retired to rest, the faithful attendant began her vigil. Gently she soothed the sick child until he fell asleep, and then, through the long hours of darkness that followed, she kept a patient watch in the silent chamber.

The babe slept peacefully all through the night, and at last the grey dawn appeared

Then, quite suddenly, the nurse heard a sound as of some one moving in the room, and knew that she was no longer alone ; and quickly springing to her feet, she beheld a strange and alarming sight.

Standing close beside the sleeping child was an old Zingara, or Spanish gipsy-woman, clad in curious fantastic robes, gazing with fierce, dark eyes upon the little one, who was now moving restlessly in his sleep. With her skinny arms upraised as though uttering an incantation, and her piercing eyes fixed upon the slumbering child, the old Zingara looked such a malevolent figure that the startled attendant shrieked aloud with terror, and her cries very soon aroused the whole household.

Quickly the servants seized the old hag, and dragged her from the room ; and in spite of her explanations that she had but come to read the fortune of the sleeping child, they roughly thrust her from the Castle, saying that she was a witch, and meant mischief.

Their fears were confirmed next day, when the sick babe was found to be somewhat worse ; and then, according to the superstitions of those times, the Count, full of grief and rage, declared that his child had been bewitched and spell-bound by the intruder of the night before. All his friends and servitors were of the same mind, and after searching in the neighbouring country side, they at length found and seized the old Zingara, and hurried her off to be burnt as a witch.

In vain the poor creature begged for mercy, and protested her innocence: with kicks and cuffs she was dragged roughly along, and bound to the stake that had already been set up for her. Quickly the faggots were piled around, and set alight, and as the cruel flames leaped up, and the victim's shrieks rose to the skies her tormentors answered with mocking taunts and howls of rage.

Amongst those in the crowd gathered round the pile was the Zingara's own daughter, a beautiful young gipsy named Azucena, who had followed in the crush with her babe in her arms, trying vainly to get a last word with her doomed mother. But the clamouring crowd, mad with eagerness to see the witch burn, roughly pressed her back, and when the poor girl at length came upon the dreadful scene, the flames were already raging fiercely around the stake, and the wretched victim was almost dead.

The old Zingara, however, cast a dying glance upon her grief-stricken child, and with her last breath she cried out: "Avenge me, my daughter! Avenge me!"

Full of rage and despair, Azucena rushed away from the terrible scene, and, determined to take a speedy revenge, she entered the Count's deserted castle, and snatching up the sick child—who was already recovering—she ran back with him to the place of execution, intending to burn him in the same fire that had consumed her mother.

The mad crowd had departed by this time, and stirring up the dying embers into a blaze once more, the young gipsy was just about to fling a second victim into their midst, when the Count's child uttered a plaintive cry.

The child's wailing softened the heart of Azucena for a moment, and putting him down on the grass beside her own babe, she sank to the ground in a semi-conscious state.

Suddenly, however, a vision of her poor mother writhing in the flames and calling out for vengeance arose before her troubled imagination, and starting up in a delirium of rage, she seized the wailing infant, and flung him into the midst of the flames with a triumphant cry.

But her triumph was quickly changed to horror, for, on turning to pick up her own sweet babe, she found that *the Count's son was still alive!* In that moment of blind frenzy, she had snatched up her *own* child in mistake, and cast him into the devouring flames.

Stunned by this terrible blow, Azucena was now filled with remorse and woe, and tenderly lifting the helpless babe who had been the innocent cause of two such dreadful deeds, she bore him away to the mountains of Biscaglia, to be brought up as her own son in the gipsy tribe to which she belonged. But, though Azucena soon grew to love her adopted son with all her heart, she could not

forget the past, and she still nursed a deep desire for vengeance against the murderers of her mother.

When, after the burning of the supposed witch, it was discovered that the Count's sick child had been stolen, a great outcry of grief arose, and as the young Zingara, Azucena (who had been observed to rush away during the burning of her mother), had now disappeared from the neighbourhood, it was plain to all that she had taken the missing babe with her, out of revenge. The Count, in despair, sent out search parties in every direction ; but all their efforts were in vain, for no traces could be found of the lost child.

Now it happened that during the evening after the old Zingara's terrible death one of the Count's followers, Ferrando, came past the place of execution, and noticed upon the heap of ashes the charred bones of a little child amongst those of the gipsy-woman, and he at once came to the conclusion that Azucena, in revenge, had stolen away his lord's babe in order to burn him upon the same pile with her mother. He was filled with horror as the certainty of this grew upon him, but he decided to say nothing about it to the Count, thinking it more merciful to let the distracted father imagine that his stolen child was still living. However, he stored up in his memory the picture of the young Zingara's features, that he might know her again, and he determined that if

ever he should discover her whereabouts, she should also suffer death by burning for her dreadful deed.

But, in spite of Ferrando's caution, the Count de Luna never recovered from the loss of his little one, but died of grief a short time after ; and as he lay dying, he besought his elder son to still continue the search for the stolen child. The young Count remembered his father's wish, and as he grew up to manhood, he never ceased to make enquiries for his missing brother in every place he visited.

Meanwhile the stolen child was living the free and happy life of a gipsy in the mountains of Biscaglia. He was given the name of Manrico, and as he was led from the very first to look upon Azucena as his mother, he had no idea of his true and exalted birth.

He loved his supposed mother with great devotion, and as the years went on, and he grew up into a handsome and noble youth, Azucena felt as proud of her adopted son as though he had indeed been her own.

Manrico, being both brave and daring in disposition, very early had the craving for adventure, and as soon as he had learned how to wield a sword with skill, he left the gipsy band and went off to the wars to seek glory and renown. Success smiled on him from the first, and the brave youth, after distinguishing himself in several campaigns, was spoken of with honour and respect wherever he went.

After many wanderings, Manrico at length found himself with the army he had joined—whose cause he felt to be a just one—engaged in settling a dispute with the powerful kingdom of Arragon, and learning that a grand Tournament was to be held in this very country, he determined to enter the lists himself. So, having donned a suit of black armour, with an unblazoned shield, he rode off to the Tournament, where he soon covered himself with glory; for his valour and skill was so great that he carried all before him, and none could overcome him in single combat.

When the Tournament came to an end, Manrico was consequently awarded the victor's wreath of laurel, and the brave youth knelt to be crowned by the fair hands of the lovely Lady Leonora, who had been chosen to give away the prizes.

Now, this Lady Leonora was the most beautiful of all the fair and noble ladies in attendance upon the Queen of Arragon, and as Manrico gazed upwards into her tender dark eyes, a thrill of love and admiration ran through his whole being, and he felt that she would reign in his heart for ever.

When he returned to his camp, he thought of her constantly, and at last the longing to see, or at least be near to her once again, became so strong within him, that (although he well knew, being of but humble gipsy-birth, as he supposed, he could not aspire to the

hand of a high-born lady) he determined to let her know of his love and devotion.

So, every evening, clad in the garb of a Troubadour, he made his way to the palace of Aliaferia, where the Queen of Arragon held Court; and there, beneath the window of his lady-love, he sang a sweet, passionate serenade, to the accompaniment of a soft-toned harp.

Nor was Leonora insensible to these tender strains that nightly swelled beneath her window; for she, too, had constantly thought upon Manrico, whose valour and noble appearance had won her heart at the Tournament.

When she heard the sweet notes of the bold serenader for the first time, she remembered his voice, and a thrill of joy went through her as, flying to the open lattice, she recognised in the Troubadour below, the form of her brave hero. Manrico was filled with rapture when he found that Leonora did not despise his love, and after this the lovers frequently met for a few blissful moments in the palace gardens after darkness had fallen, caring naught for the risk they ran.

But Leonora had another suitor, who quickly grew madly jealous of the mysterious Troubadour who was known to haunt the palace grounds, though none had yet beheld him.

This was none other than the young Count de Luna, who, upon attaining to manhood, had risen high in favour at the Court of

Arragon, and having fallen in love with the beautiful Leonora, he had early offered himself as a suitor. And even when the fair lady-in-waiting, having no thoughts for any other than her beloved Troubadour, refused to smile upon him, the Count still continued to press his suit; and full of haughty anger against his unknown rival, he also went to walk in the palace gardens at night, in the hope of encountering the favoured Troubadour, whom he little dreamed was his own long-lost brother.

So it happened one night, as he stood beneath Leonora's window, he heard the soft strains of a harp, and following the sounds, he presently beheld the noble form of the young Troubadour standing in a secluded dell, with the moonlight shining upon him. At the same moment, Leonora herself appeared, and, addressing her lover in tender tones, declared that she loved him with her whole heart.

Full of jealous rage, the Count de Luna sprang between the lovers, and haughtily called upon the Troubadour to declare his name; and on hearing that his hated rival was none other than the renowned Manrico, the enemy of his country, he at once challenged him to mortal combat.

In fear for her lover's life, Leonora begged them not to fight; but, rivals in love and war, the pair were not to be put asunder, and rushing off to a more distant spot, they began a passionate duel. Although, as the

swords clashed together, the proud Count boastfully taunted his youthful rival with lack of courage and skill, he soon discovered that he had met his match; for in a few minutes, Manrico had disarmed his enemy, and held him at his sword's point. Some strange inward power, and a sudden feeling of mercy, restrained him, however, from striking the fatal blow, and sheathing his sword, he allowed the dazed Count to rise and depart.

Soon after this event, the war was continued, and in a great battle, the army in which Manrico served was defeated. Even when he saw that all was lost, the brave Manrico still tried to rally his forces; but at length, in a desperate struggle against a mighty charge of the enemy, led by the Count de Luna, he fell, woefully wounded, and was left upon the field for dead.

But it happened that Azucena, the gipsy, was camping in the neighbourhood, with some members of her tribe, and hearing that her brave Manrico had been slain in the battle, she went to look for his body amongst the dead. After a long and weary search she at length found the poor youth, covered with wounds, but, to her joy, still alive; and after binding up his hurts, she had him carried away to his old home in the mountains of Biscaglia.

Here, with great tenderness, she nursed him back to health and strength once more, and since Manrico had been absent at the

wars a long time, the reunion was very sweet to her, for she had grown to love him as her own son. Yet when Manrico told her of his two meetings with the Count de Luna, all her old desire to avenge her mother came back with renewed force, and she implored him to slay the young Count the next time he had him in his power. She then told him the story of how her mother had been so cruelly burned as a witch, and of the dreadful mistake she herself had made when seeking vengeance; but as she did not inform Manrico that *he* was that same stolen child, he still regarded himself as her son.

Whilst they were talking of these things one day, a courier arrived from the wars with a message for the young soldier, announcing that his arms had again met with success, and that the prince in command now desired Manrico to take over the defence of the fortress of Castellor, which was about to be stormed by the enemy. The message had been written by a friend of Manrico's, an officer named Ruiz, and at the end he stated that the Lady Leonora, hearing that her Troubadour lover had been killed in battle, was now about to enter a convent near the fortress.

Full of despair at the thought that Leonora might even now be lost to him for ever, Manrico ordered his fleetest horse to be saddled at once; and, heedless of the pleading of Azucena, who feared for his

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scarcely-healed wounds, he rode off in hot haste for Castellor, praying that he might yet arrive in time to prevent his beloved one from taking the vows of a nun.

Now, the Count de Luna had also been told that Leonora meant to enter a convent, and as his desire to possess her was still as strong as ever, he laid a cunning plan for carrying her off, even from the threshold of the altar itself.

On the evening upon which Leonora was to take the vows, he secured a small body of soldiers to help him, and hid amidst the bushes beside the little chapel that adjoined the convent; and just as the procession of nuns approached, with the beautiful maiden in their midst, he rushed forth to stop their passage.

Leonora trembled at the sudden appearance of the Count, whom she had always disliked and feared, and when he declared passionately that he meant to carry her off by force to be his bride, she shrieked, and repulsed him indignantly.

At this critical moment, Manrico suddenly rode up, and springing from his horse, he rushed between the pair, who stared at him with utter astonishment. But surprise was quickly changed to joy and relief on the part of Leonora, who clung to her restored lover with trusting arms; and when the Count realised that the hated rival, whom he had left for dead upon the field of battle,

was still alive, he was filled with disappointment and jealous despair.

Wildly, he ordered his men to attack the newcomer; but at the same time, a large troop of the enemy's soldiers, led by the officer, Ruiz, rode up to the help of Manrico. Seeing that further resistance was useless, the Count was compelled to retire, and since Leonora had no longer any desire to take convent vows, now that her lover was restored to her, Manrico joyfully led her away to the fortress of Castellor, which he had been bidden to defend.

Here, for a short time, the lovers were very happy, and, hand locked in hand, they walked daily upon the battlements of the castle, talking of the sweet time to come when they would be free to live together in peace and joy.

But trouble and grief was yet in store for them; for the Count de Luna, as leader of the storming party, was determined that the attack on the castle should meet with success, and that Manrico should be utterly defeated. With this object, he sent for additional men, and arranged all his plans with great care; and as he stood within the encampment just before the attack, he knew that Castellor was doomed. Yet he felt little satisfaction in this thought, for he could not get away from the taunting fact that even when he had parted the lovers for ever, Leonora would never care for him, since her whole heart was given to Manrico.

These galling thoughts were quickly interrupted by the sounds of a disturbance in the camp, and a few moments later, the Count's old follower, Ferrando, entered the tent, saying that a gipsy-woman had been found hovering in the neighbourhood, and seized as a spy. A number of soldiers immediately afterwards entered, dragging with them the Zingara, Azucena, who had followed her adopted son to Castellor in the hope of being able to serve him, but had now fallen into the hands of his enemies.

On questioning the gipsy and learning that she came from the mountains of Biscaglia, the Count at once demanded whether she remembered how the young child of the Count de Luna had been stolen away and carried thither; and when the Zingara replied that she had heard the story, he eagerly asked if she had any tidings of the lost one, who was his own brother.

On hearing this, Azucena trembled with excitement, knowing now that she was in the presence of the man upon whom she wished to revenge herself for the death of her mother; and at the same moment, Ferrando, who had been gazing at her intently, suddenly remembered her features, and declared to the Count that this was the very same gipsy-woman who had stolen his brother years ago and burned him upon the witch's pyre, relating, for the first time, how he had seen the child's bones amongst the ashes.

Full of horror at what he heard, the Count ordered the Zingara to be kept a captive, declaring that she should burn at the stake after the storming of the castle; and on learning from poor Azucena's disjointed cries for mercy and help that she called upon the name of Manrico as her son, he exulted cruelly, knowing that he could now give his hated rival additional suffering through the torture of his mother.

No sooner had the Zingara been dragged away, than the storming of the castle began; and although Manrico and his followers defended the fortress with utmost bravery, they were at last overwhelmed by the enemy's superior numbers, and forced to yield.

Manrico was taken prisoner, but Leonora, with the help of the faithful Ruiz, managed to escape to a place of safety. The Count de Luna, immediately after the conflict, returned to the royal castle of Aliaferia with his captured rival and Azucena the gipsy; and having thrust them together into a strong tower, he quickly made arrangements for their early execution. He gave orders that Manrico should be beheaded as a state prisoner, and the Zingara burnt as a witch; yet even this triumph over his hated enemy could not compensate him for the loss of Leonora, of whom he had heard nothing since the fall of Castellor.

But Leonora was in a safe hiding-place, and on the night before the execution, she

made her way, protected by the darkness, into the palace grounds, and standing beneath the tower in which Manrico lay, she began to sing softly to let her lover know that she was near him.

Presently, Manrico, who had recognised her voice with joy, answered in the same fashion ; but it was a passionate song of farewell that he sang, for he knew that he was to die at day-break.

On hearing this sad song, Leonora was filled with grief and despair, but determined to make a last effort to save her lover's life even at the sacrifice of her own ; and as the Count de Luna a few moments later happened to come past that way, she rushed wildly forward, and falling on her knees, implored him to spare the life of the man she loved.

The Count, though amazed at her sudden appearance, greeted her gladly ; but when he found that she was pleading for her lover, he was filled with jealousy once again, and refused her request, even though she offered to give her own life in exchange.

Then, seeing that nothing else would avail with the inexorable Count, Leonora, though she scarce could utter the fatal words, offered to become his bride, if he would only promise to spare the life of Manrico ; and De Luna, triumphant now, agreed gladly, and bade her set the captive free at once.

Quickly Leonora went to seek the guards, but on the way she sucked some deadly poison from a ring she wore, for, having

gained her ends, she was determined to die rather than be wed to her lover's rival.

The captives in the tower had been passing a restless night, for Azucena was filled with terror at the thoughts of the sufferings she must endure on the morrow. To soothe her Manrico persuaded her to sing with him, that they might be reminded of their old happy life in the mountains of Biscaglia, where music had been a constant delight to them, and in the midst of the singing, the bolts were drawn, and Leonora entered the room.

With surprise and joy, Manrico clasped his beloved one in his arms; and then Leonora, explaining hurriedly that she had secured his freedom, besought her lover to fly at once, before his enemy had time to relent.

But Manrico, suspecting at once that Leonora had obtained his freedom by giving herself to his rival, would not stir; and instead, he began to pour forth reproaches upon her, deeming her false to him.

By this time, however, the poison she had swallowed was taking a quick, deadly effect upon Leonora, and, sinking to the ground, the poor girl told her lover, between dying gasps, that she had preferred to die rather than yield to his rival.

Overcome with despair and woe at the terrible sacrifice she had made for him, Manrico sprang forward to receive her in his arms as she expired, and at that moment the Count de Luna entered the room.

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On seeing how he had been cheated of his expected bride, the Count, full of rage, ordered Manrico to instant execution, and seizing the Zingara by the arm, he dragged her roughly to the window to see her son die.

Azucena was half-dazed with grief and terror, but when the axe had fallen, and the brave Manrico was no more, she turned upon the taunting Count, and telling him in frenzied tones of the true birth of her adopted son, she ended her story by shrieking out: "*Thou hast slain thine own brother!*"

On hearing these terrible words, De Luna's gloating exultation was turned into the deepest horror; and thus, at last, was the gipsy avenged for the murder of her mother.

RIGOLETTO

DURING the sixteenth century there reigned over the fair city of Mantua a handsome young Duke, whose brilliant Court was one of the gayest and most licentious of its age. For the youthful ruler cared little for the responsibilities of State, and instead of seeking the welfare of his people, he chose to gather around him a band of careless nobles of his own age, and to pass his time amidst the excitements of wild excesses and love-intrigues. Susceptible, ardent, and inconstant, his amours were frequent, passionate, and short, and there was scarcely a lady at his Court—not to mention various pretty maidens of more humble birth—with whom he had not, at some time or other, fancied himself in love.

In all his intrigues the Duke was constantly aided by his Jester, Rigoletto, a hunchback, who was the most privileged person at Court ; for, beneath the cap and bells, the buffoon possessed a fertile, scheming brain that never failed to devise cunning ruses to gratify the lawless passions of his unscrupulous master.

For this reason Rigoletto had gained many enemies, for, besides exciting the jealousy of

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the courtiers by making himself the favourite of their royal master, he was also hated by many haughty nobles whose honour had been assailed by his intrigues. The jealous lords constantly vented their spleen upon the hated Jester by scornful taunts and slights, all of which Rigoletto returned with interest, making the proud courtiers the subjects of his spiteful wit and stinging raillery, whilst inwardly he triumphed in a joy they knew naught about.

For Rigoletto had a beautiful daughter, named Gilda, whom he loved passionately, and fearing lest the maiden's loveliness should lead to the ruin of her innocence, he had ever kept her existence a secret even from his most intimate acquaintances.

To this end, on coming to Mantua, he placed her in a humble house in a quiet part of the city, under the care of her old nurse, Giovanna, and every evening after dark he went to receive the sweet caresses of this darling child, a stolen happiness that more than compensated him for the scorn of his enemies.

Little did the poor Jester guess that the precious treasure he guarded so lovingly was doomed to become the prey of the very person whose notice of her he most dreaded—his royal master ; yet so it was ordained.

For every morning Gilda attended matins in the neighbouring church, and here she was at length seen by the young Duke, who quickly became enamoured of her beauty. Every day he stole into the church to watch her at her devotions, and Gilda, though she

scarcely dared return the ardent glances bestowed upon her by the handsome cavalier, soon felt an answering thrill in her own heart. Yet, fearing her father's anger, she kept this new sweet joy a secret ; and since the Duke did not need his favourite's help in such a simple enterprise, it came about that Rigoletto remained in ignorance that his happiness was at stake. But in spite of the care he took, his secret visits to the humble house at length became known to the jealous courtiers ; and this discovery was made soon after the Duke had first seen Gilda at the church.

One evening, a splendid entertainment was being held at the Ducal Palace, and in an anteroom a group of courtiers, freshly smarting under the spiteful wit of Rigoletto, were gathered together venting their grievances, and listening to the special complaints of one of their number, Count Ceprano, whose pretty wife was for that evening the Duke's plaything, thanks to the machinations of the hated Jester.

Whilst they were talking angrily together, they were joined by another noble, named Marullo, who declared that he had great news for them ; and in answer to their eager questions, he told them he had discovered that Rigoletto had a sweetheart, since he went nearly every evening after dark to pay a visit at a humble house in a certain quiet street—a sure sign that his mistress dwelt there.

The courtiers all laughed derisively at the idea of the ugly hunchback being in love ;

but Ceprano, seeing in the incident a means of revenging himself upon the scheming Jester, quickly proposed a plan to them. He suggested that they should repair to the humble dwelling pointed out by Marullo, and, forcing an entrance, carry off the fair lady who dwelt therein; and by this means, they would punish the hunchback for the insults he had piled upon them.

The courtiers eagerly fell in with the plan, and having promised to meet Ceprano late next evening in order to carry out the enterprise, they returned to the brilliant salon. Here, dancing, feasting, and merriment was being indulged in with an utter absence of restraint, for it was the delight of the Duke of Mantua to pursue his pleasures with an extravagant recklessness.

But suddenly, the revels were strangely interrupted, for after a loud altercation with the servitors at the door, who vainly tried to detain him, an uninvited guest dashed through the careless throng in the salon, and quickly made his way to the spot where the Duke was standing. The intruder was an aged noble, the Count of Monterone, whose beautiful daughter had lately been stolen from her home to gratify the evil passion of the libertine Duke, and in a voice trembling with scorn and anger, the outraged father demanded the restoration of his child, calling down vengeance upon her betrayer.

But Monterone's appeals and threats were drowned in derisive laughter, and the Duke, impatient at such an unpleasant interruption

to the revels, instantly ordered his guards to imprison the Count in a cell beneath.

Rigoletto, taking up his cue from his master's humour, made merry over the poor father's despair, and uttered mocking quips at his expense; but soon he regretted his words, for as Monterone was being led away by the guards, he turned upon the Jester and cursed him with great fury.

Now, Rigoletto was very superstitious, and he was filled with fear as he realised that a father's curse had fallen upon him, and though the revels went on as before, the incident took such a hold on his imagination that he felt some terrible woe was in store for him.

Late next night, these disturbing thoughts were still in the Jester's mind as he hastened towards the humble abode of his beloved daughter; and when he was presently accosted by a begging bravo, he stopped to converse with him, thinking that he might have occasion later on for the services of some such desperate rogue.

The bravo, who gave his name as Sparafucile, declared that for gold he would dispose of any enemy who lay in the Jester's path, stating that his abode was an outlying, lonely inn, where intended victims were easily lured by the attractive looks of his pretty sister, a gipsy-girl named Maddalena.

Having agreed to seek the bravo's aid, should he need it, Rigoletto hurried into the courtyard of his house, and here he found the beautiful Gilda already waiting for him with her attendant, Giovanna.

Now, Gilda had been kept in complete ignorance of her father's name and profession, and to-night, after greeting him with her usual joyful embraces, she begged of him to reveal his true identity, being weary of the mystery that so constantly surrounded her.

But Rigoletto firmly refused her plea, gently bidding her to love him only and ask no questions; and then he turned to Giovanna, sternly demanding to know if she guarded her charge with the strictness he had commanded. Gilda trembled at this question, remembering the gallant whom she met each day at church, and whose admiring glances had aroused love in her heart; but Giovanna, less fearful, boldly answered her master's question, and assured him that he had no cause for alarm.

Then Rigoletto bade his daughter a loving farewell, and departed; for he never dared to remain long with her, for fear his absence from Court should be noticed.

No sooner had he gone than the young Duke of Mantua suddenly appeared in the courtyard, having at last discovered the abode of his new love, and determined to seek an interview with her that night; and rushing forward, he clasped Gilda in his arms, declaring that he loved her. Giovanna, having secretly received a purse of gold from the Duke upon his entrance, quietly departed into the house, and the pair were thus left alone in the courtyard.

Gilda was at first alarmed at finding

herself alone with the stranger, whom she quickly recognised as the handsome cavalier whose ardent glances had thrilled her at her morning devotions ; but, utterly unable to resist the passionate wooing of the Duke, she at length submitted willingly to his caresses, and admitted that she loved him in return. The cunning gallant described himself as a poor scholar, who would nevertheless make a humble home for her ; and Gilda was filled with rapture at the thought that no barrier of rank would thus separate her from her lover.

Presently, approaching footsteps in the street beyond warned them that this sweet interview must end, and the Duke, fearful of discovery, bade the maiden a hasty, but passionate farewell, and quickly hurried away. Then Gilda, gazing lovingly after his retreating figure, reluctantly entered the house ; but not before she had been seen by the newcomers, who were none other than Count Ceprano, Marullo, and their companion plotters, who, masked and cloaked, had come to carry out the plan of vengeance on Rigoletto which they had arranged the night before.

They were astonished at the beauty of the jester's supposed mistress, but ere they had time for further comment on the matter, they were suddenly confronted by Rigoletto himself, who, being uneasy in his mind, had returned to take another look at his daughter's sanctuary.

Marullo, quickly seeing additional zest for

their scheme in this unlooked-for interruption, gaily accosted the Jester, and making himself known, invited him to join in their enterprise; and to deceive the poor hunchback further he declared that they were about to carry off the wife of Count Ceprano, and take her to the Duke.

Rigoletto, thus imagining that his own secret treasure was not sought, quickly fell into the trap, for Ceprano's palace was situated on the opposite side of the street, a circumstance which gave credence to the story, and delighted to assist in bringing dishonour upon one of his most hated enemies, he readily agreed to join the ravishers.

Marullo then declared that since the party were all masked, Rigoletto must also have his face hidden, and seizing a scarf, he bound it so tightly over the Jester's eyes and ears, that he could neither see nor hear. He next made his victim hold the ladder they had brought against the wall of his own house, and then he and his companions, hardly able to restrain their mirth at the trick they were playing, climbed up to an open window above, and made their entry.

Rigoletto, holding the ladder below, still imagined that it was his enemy's house that was being entered, and when the ravishers presently returned, bearing Gilda in their arms, he rejoiced, thinking that the victim was Ceprano's wife. His hearing being dulled by the tight bandages over his ears, he did not catch the stifled cries

of the poor girl as she was quickly borne away; and it was not until the maskers were far out of his reach that he discovered he had been left alone.

Then, tearing off his bandage with difficulty, he saw that the ladder was leaning against the wall of his own house, and realising the cruel trick that had been played upon him, he was filled with rage and despair. He rushed madly down the street towards the palace, trembling for the fate of his beloved child, and forcing his way to the anteroom adjoining the Duke's private chamber, he found his enemies already there. For the plotters had immediately brought their prize in triumph to their royal master, declaring her to be the mistress of Rigoletto; and the Duke had received her with joy, on recognising the lovely features of his own new lady-love.

When Rigoletto reached the anteroom, he passionately demanded to have his precious daughter restored to him, being filled with woe on learning that she was even now in the power of the Duke; but the courtiers, though astonished to know that she was his child, only met him with derisive laughter, utterly disregarding his frantic appeals for mercy.

But at that moment, Gilda herself rushed forth from the Duke's room, and flung herself in her father's arms, having heard his voice in the anteroom; and as the Jester quickly hurried her away, she poured forth into his ears the whole story of her infatuation for

the handsome cavalier who had admired her in church, of his visit to her that evening, and of her despair on now discovering him to be but a base libertine, who only desired to use her as his plaything.

Yet, even in spite of this knowledge, the poor girl loved him still ; and when Rigoletto swore vengeance on the false betrayer, she entreated him to spare her lover, whom she had already forgiven for the wrong he had done her.

But Rigoletto's anger against his royal master was so furious that nothing but death would satisfy his longing for revenge, and quickly sending for Sparafucile, the bravo, he bargained with him for a sum of gold to entice the Duke to his lonely inn and murder him there. A few days later Sparafucile returned, saying that his sister, Maddalena, had already brought herself before the Duke's notice, and enticed him into a promise to visit the inn that evening, when his murder would be easily accomplished during the night ; and Rigoletto determined to take Gilda to the spot also, that he might convince her of her base lover's faithlessness, and so cure her infatuation for him.

So when dusk fell, the Jester and his daughter quickly made their way to a wild spot on the outskirts of the city ; and on arriving at the bravo's lonely inn, Rigoletto drew the maiden into the shadows near a window, from whence they could see and hear all that took place in the room beyond.

A few minutes later, they saw the Duke, in disguise, enter the inn; and as Sparafucile left the room, after serving the guest with wine, his pretty gipsy-sister, Maddalena, took his place. The Duke at once began to make love to the girl, who, however, only laughed and teased him in return; and when Gilda thus saw for herself how soon her fickle gallant had forgotten her, and heard him utter the same sweet love-speeches to the gipsy-girl that he had whispered into her own delighted ears only a few evenings ago, she was filled with deepest grief.

Rigoletto, seeing that his daughter was at last convinced of her lover's faithlessness, was now eager to get her away from the inn, not wishing her to know of the tragic end in store for the false betrayer, and bidding her hasten home at once, he told her to disguise herself in the garments of a youth, which he had provided for her, and to then fly on horseback to Verona, where he would meet her later on. At first, Gilda could not bring herself to leave the spot; but when her father sternly repeated his command, she hurried away at once to obey his will.

Sparafucile now came out to learn his final instructions, and Rigoletto told him that after murdering the Duke, he was to place the dead body in a sack, that it might be ready for him to throw into the river Mincio that flowed close by. He then gave the bravo half of the money agreed upon between them, and promising to return at midnight with the remainder of the money

when he should expect to find the deed accomplished, he departed.

Throughout the evening, the unsuspecting Duke amused himself with the pretty decoy, Maddalena, and the gipsy - girl at length became so fascinated with him that she could no longer bear to think of taking his life, and a feeling of pity for his fate took sudden hold of her heart. She was therefore filled with repulsion when her brother next appeared, and invited the guest to retire to rest in the upper chamber set apart for him; and when, after a last tender glance at her, the Duke had mounted the rickety stairs and stretched himself on the couch above, she besought Sparafucile to spare the young man's life, declaring she felt a tender interest in him.

But Sparafucile muttered angrily that the hunchback's gold was more to him than the gay cavalier's life; and it was not until Maddalena again passionately implored him with tears in her eyes, to grant her request, that he at length agreed on a compromise. He promised to spare the cavalier only on condition that some other stranger called at the inn before midnight, whom he could slay instead, and pass off to the hunchback as his victim; and with this, Maddalena was forced to be content, though she felt little hope of gaining her wish, since it was a stormy night, and no strangers were likely to call.

Now, the whole of this conversation between the brother and sister had been overheard by Gilda; for, though she had been to her home

and changed her garments for male attire, according to Rigoletto's orders, she had been unable to resist the temptation to return to the inn that she might look once again upon the features of the man she still loved so dearly.

She arrived just in time to hear the gipsy-girl pleading for the life of the Duke, and realising that he was about to be murdered, she was overcome with horror. But on hearing the condition by which he might yet be saved, a wild enthusiasm filled her heart, and she resolved heroically that since her own life was ruined by a hopeless passion, she would sacrifice herself for the sake of her faithless lover.

Having commended her soul to Heaven, she calmly approached the door and knocked, and instantly there was a dead silence within. Maddalena trembled on hearing the sound, but Sparafucile drew his dagger, and upon a second knock being heard, he flung open the door and fiercely stabbed the supposed youth standing there. Gilda fell to the ground without a single word, and hastily producing a sack, the brother and sister fastened the body within it.

It was now midnight, and a few minutes later, Rigoletto entered, and paying down the remainder of the money promised, he demanded his victim. Sparafucile produced the sack, and not wishing his trick to be discovered, he suggested that the body should be immediately thrown into the river, and offered his assistance for this purpose.

Rigoletto, however, declined the offer, desiring to gloat over his victim alone; and when the bravo had reluctantly relinquished the sack, he dragged it a few yards distant, and then sat down to rejoice over his fallen enemy. But at that moment he heard the sound of a voice singing in the upper chamber of the inn; for the Duke had been awakened by the talking below, and was now indulging in gay snatches of song.

Instantly recognising the voice as that of the Duke, Rigoletto was filled with amazement and angry disappointment; and furious at having been thus cheated of his prey, he tore open the sack, and by the light of the moon beheld the beloved features of his own beautiful daughter!

Horror-struck, the poor hunchback lifted his child in his arms, and wildly implored her to speak to him once again, and Gilda, who was still breathing, opened her eyes and murmured a few words, saying that she had willingly given her life to save that of her lover.

She then sank back, dead, in her father's arms; and Rigoletto, suddenly remembering the curse that had been laid upon him for having mocked at a distracted parent's grief, realised that his retribution was just, and with a despairing cry of woe, fell senseless beside the prostrate body of his beloved child.



MOZART

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

ONE bright summer morning a pleasant hum of excitement pervaded Count Almaviva's noble castle near Seville; for that evening, Figaro, the Count's servant, was to be wedded to the Countess's pretty waiting-maid, Susanna, and the nuptials were to be celebrated with great festivities, in which not only the whole household, but the peasants on the estate were to join. Already the rustic maidens and their swains were decking themselves in holiday garb, for there was to be dancing and merrymaking on the green during the daytime before the feasting and fireworks at night, and all were eager to begin the revels.

But, though the light-hearted peasants little guessed it, the bride and bridegroom elect were fated to go through many wild mishaps ere their hands could be joined that day, and even now, early though it was, the first cloud had arisen. For Figaro had just made the unpleasant discovery that his master, whose chief excitement in life was to engage in love intrigues, had suddenly become infatuated with the charms of Susanna, and though the information was



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given him by the pretty Susanna herself, who laughingly disclaimed any preference for the amorous Count, the future husband was filled with perplexing thoughts.

He now understood why Basilio, an old music-master established at the castle to help the great lord in his intrigues, had lately persuaded him to desire Susanna to accept a secret mission to London offered her by the Count, who was being sent by the King to that city as Ambassador, with Figaro attending him as Courier, for it was plain to see that this secret mission had been invented in order that the Ambassador might enjoy the society of his Courier's charming wife. However, Figaro was a lively fellow, whose keen wits had helped him out of many difficulties, and though indignant at the news, he merrily assured Susanna that he would soon devise a plan for thwarting the Count and his confederate.

Now, Figaro, besides being witty and gay, was also of a handsome appearance, and so it happened that a certain dame, named Marcellina, who, though advancing in years, was of skittish and sentimental disposition, became enamoured of the fascinating *valet*, when on a visit to the castle about this time.

Being in need of money owing to his extravagant habits, Figaro had consequently found Marcellina very willing to lend him a considerable sum, on condition that he signed a paper promising to marry her unless he refunded the money; and the gay *valet*, never dreaming that he would ever be called on

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to keep his agreement, carelessly signed the document.

However, Marcellina was in earnest, and, having got beyond the age when admirers were to be secured by her personal attractions, did not intend to let such a good chance of marriage slip through her fingers ; and on discovering that Figaro was about to be wedded to Susanna, she was filled with indignation, and sent at once to Seville for Dr Bartolo, whose housekeeper she had been for many years, and with whom she had once indulged in a love intrigue.

The worthy doctor did not arrive until the very day of the wedding, but Marcellina, declaring that there was still time to secure her rights, produced the contract she had induced Figaro to sign, and begged him to help her to prevent the marriage. Dr Bartolo, who also had a grudge against Figaro for having thwarted him on a former occasion, readily agreed to help her, and between them, the pair arranged that Susanna should be frightened by a threat of making known her master's advances to her, when, to save her reputation, she would rebuff the Count, who, being piqued, would then give assistance to Marcellina's claim.

To this end, Marcellina presently waylaid Susanna in the pretty maid's own apartment, and began to squabble, hinting plainly that the Count's infatuation for her would soon be known to all ; but Susanna, though somewhat alarmed, only met her taunts with saucy retorts, and soon forced her to beat a hasty retreat.

No sooner had she gone, than the Countess's page, Cherubino, a handsome youth who adored his mistress, yet made love to all the maids in the castle, rushed into the room, and announcing that the Count had just dismissed him from his service, because he had found him flirting with the gardener's charming daughter, Barbarina, he entreated Susanna to intercede for him.

Whilst they were talking together, the Count was heard approaching, and terrified at the thought of being discovered with the favoured lady's-maid, Cherubino hastily hid behind a large armchair, just as his master entered the room.

The enamoured Count immediately began to make love to Susanna, entreating her to grant him an interview in the garden at twilight; but Susanna, remembering Marcellina's hints, received him coldly, and begged him to leave her. The Count, however, was not to be so easily repulsed, and was about to snatch a kiss, when he suddenly heard the voice of old Basilio, the mischief-making music-master, asking for him without; and not wishing to be discovered, even by his confederate, in such a compromising situation, he hastily sought a hiding-place, and rushed towards the very same chair behind which Cherubino was already concealed. The sprightly page, however, saw him coming, and in a twinkling, he adroitly slipped round to the other side and ensconced himself in the seat of the chair, just as the Count crouched behind.

Susanna, trembling at the narrow escape she had had, hastily flung a dress over the curled-up form of Cherubino, and no sooner had she done so, than Basilio entered the room. The old scandal-monger had come to draw from Susanna all she knew of Cherubino's love for his mistress, and in spite of the waiting-maid's indignant denials and frantic efforts to stop him, he declared that the page's infatuation was the talk of the whole household.

Now, Count Almaviva, though frequently engaging in love intrigues himself, was extremely jealous where the honour of his Countess was involved; and furious at Basilio's words, he sprang from behind the chair, and at the same moment discovered the hapless page in the seat.

The Count, now doubly jealous, imagining that Cherubino had also been making love to Susanna, began to pour forth abuse on them both, and declared that Figaro should be told of his bride-elect's duplicity; but Susanna, assured of Figaro's trust in her, pleaded only for Cherubino's pardon, slyly reminding her master that the page had overheard his words of love to her, and should on that account be conciliated. Almaviva, thus compelled to admit the prudence of such a course, then agreed to pardon Cherubino, but only on condition that he set off immediately for military service, to command a company in the Count's own regiment; and the page was ordered to start for Seville at once.

Meanwhile, the Countess Almaviva had

also been told of her husband's infatuation for the waiting-maid, and knowing that Susanna was too faithful to betray her, she bade the girl fetch Figaro to her boudoir, that the three might concoct a plot by means of which her husband should be exposed, and, thus cured of engaging in such intrigues, be led back to the arms of his still loving wife.

Figaro's keen wit soon furnished a scheme, and he said that he would send an anonymous letter to the Count, informing him that the Countess intended to grant a secret interview to a certain gallant at the revels to be held that night, which would rouse his jealousy to such a pitch that, whilst endeavouring to prove his suspicions, the wedding could take place before he had time to prevent it. He also suggested that, to entangle him further, Susanna should grant the Count the twilight meeting in the garden he had asked for, but that Cherubino, who had not yet departed, should take her place, dressed in her garments; and then the Countess should surprise the pair, and compel the Count, after thus discovering him in an intrigue, to sue for pardon and return to her affections.

The Countess gladly agreed to this plan, and Figaro, having despatched the letter to the Count by the hands of Basilio, sent the page to the boudoir to be dressed for his part. Cherubino, delighted to be once more in the company of his beloved mistress, readily entered into the plot, and Susanna,

after locking the door to prevent interruption began to dress him in a gown and head-dress of her own, the page's fresh complexion and curling hair helping to make the disguise more complete.

But just as Susanna had gone into an inner room to look for a ribbon, the Count himself knocked at the boudoir door, and finding it locked he became suspicious and demanded to have it opened. Full of terror Cherubino ran to hide in a dress cupboard, which the Countess hastily locked, placing the key in her pocket ; and then she admitted the Count, who was rendered more suspicious than ever on observing her confused looks.

Remembering the anonymous letter he had just received, he declared that she had a lover hidden within the cupboard, having heard a sound of shuffling from its depths ; and when the Countess tremblingly announced that it was only Susanna, who had retired there, interrupted in the act of trying on a new dress, he angrily called on the maid to answer to her name. Cherubino, however, kept silence, and Susanna, who had returned unobserved and was now hidden behind a curtain, dared not speak. The Count now felt that his suspicions were confirmed, and in a storm of jealousy, he dragged off the Countess to get tools to break open the cupboard, first locking the doors of the boudoir and inner chamber so that the captive should not escape.

As soon as they had gone, Susanna rushed to the cupboard and unfastened the door

with a duplicate key she carried in her pocket, and Cherubino rushed wildly out, freed of his borrowed garments, which he had hastily discarded. Finding all the exits locked, he opened the window and sprang lightly into the garden below, and Susanna, having assured herself that he had come to no harm, took his place in the cupboard, fastening the door on the inside just as the Count and Countess returned.

The Count had brought tools to break open the cupboard lock, but the Countess, seeing that he was in earnest, produced the key, and in despair opened the door herself. A sigh of relief and wonder escaped her as Susanna stepped forth, and the Count, dumbfounded and ashamed of his suspicion, instantly sought pardon of his wife. However, remembering the letter he had received, he asked what it meant, and the Countess told him that it had been written by Figaro at her orders to provoke his jealousy. But on Figaro himself entering at that moment to announce that the wedding guests were assembling, the Count decided to test the truth of this statement, and showing him the letter, he asked if he knew anything about it. The *valet*, not knowing that his master had been told the truth, at first denied all knowledge of it, and it was not until after sundry meaning glances from the Countess, and saucy pinches from Susanna, that he guessed his mistake, and admitted writing the note.

The situation might now have been saved

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had not old Antonio, the gardener, just then entered with several broken flower-pots in his hands, which he tearfully declared had been smashed by a man whom he had seen jump from the window of the boudoir into the very midst of them only a few minutes ago ; and the Count's suspicions were quickly aroused again.

But Figaro, warned by the distracted looks of the Countess and Susanna, immediately announced that it was he who had made the leap, explaining that he had been waiting for Susanna, when, on hearing his master's angry voice, he had become alarmed, remembering the letter he had written, and had jumped from the window to escape his presence.

This explanation, however, did not satisfy the Count, who still felt that he was being deceived ; and when, a few moments later, Dr Bartolo and Marcellina entered, having been awaiting this opportunity in the ante-room, he gladly listened to the charge they brought against Figaro. Marcellina produced the contract signed by the *valet*, both she and Dr Bartolo declaring that it proved a promise of marriage, and money lent ; and the Count announced that his lawyer should attend to the matter at once, thus hoping, in his pique, to delay, or prevent, the marriage of Figaro and Susanna.

He was delighted when, a little later, Don Curzio, his lawyer, after reading the document, announced that it was legally binding, and that Figaro must either immediately pay

back the money lent, or marry Marcellina, according to his agreement; for he knew that Figaro, being of an extravagant disposition, could certainly not produce the large sum of money named.

The Countess and Susanna were distracted at this decision, and Figaro indignantly declared that he could not be married against his will without the sanction of his parents, whom he believed were of high birth. When asked to produce his noble parents, he admitted that he knew not who they were, having been stolen from his home by gipsies when a little child; and he added that the only clue to his identity he now possessed was a private mark that had been made upon his arm in the form of a spatula.

On learning this, Marcellina uttered a cry of surprise and joy, and next moment she clasped Figaro in her arms, declaring that he was her own dear son, whom she had lost years ago, and whose arm had been marked with a spatula in his infancy. It now transpired that this was the truth, Figaro indeed being the son born of an amour between Marcellina and Dr Bartolo, and since the worthy doctor announced that he should now marry his old housekeeper and recognise her son as his heir, the Count felt that his scheme of revenge had crumbled to pieces.

Figaro and Susanna were overjoyed to find that there was no further bar to their union, and the Count, very much against his will, gave orders that their wedding should take place that evening after all, and high

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revels be held. The rustic guests had already assembled, and during the afternoon, dancing and merry-making began in the park with much spirit.

Now, Cherubino had not yet departed for Seville, being determined to remain at the castle, at least so long as the revels lasted ; and having induced his pretty sweetheart, Barbarina, to deck him in feminine garments once more, he joined in a procession of rustic maidens, who presently came to offer flowers to the Countess.

Barbarina introduced him as her cousin, who had come to see the wedding ; and the Countess, greatly taken with the pretty look of the pretended maiden, kissed him playfully on the forehead, to the inward delight of the saucy page. At this moment, however, the Count appeared with old Antonio, the gardener, who, having picked up Cherubino's hat in his cottage, had discovered the ruse, and brought his master to the scene to unmask the young scapegrace ; and the Countess, disconcerted on hearing that she had kissed Cherubino in mistake for a girl, now thought it best to admit to the Count that it was indeed the page who had jumped from her boudoir window that morning, and that she and Susanna had been dressing him to take part in a jest they had planned.

The Count angrily dismissed the crest-fallen page, and then, turning to Figaro, who was just approaching, he sternly demanded what he meant by stating that he had jumped from the boudoir window, when

Cherubino had now confessed that it was he himself who had performed that feat. But Figaro's ready wit prevented him from being at a loss, and he answered instantly that the statement only proved that they had both had the same fancy to leap through the window, which was not strange, since it was well known that great wits jumped together. He then ran off to join in a merry dance that was just commencing, and the Count was left to the perplexing thought that he was still being fooled.

Nor was the Countess satisfied ; for although the bride and bridegroom elect were now happy and likely to gain their ends, she felt that her own purpose had not been yet achieved.

So presently she sought Susanna to arrange another plot with her, and between them, the pair agreed that Susanna should now grant the Count the interview he had asked of her earlier in the day, but that the Countess should take her place. Susanna wrote a seductive little note to her master, appointing a meeting at twilight in a certain quiet glade ; and this she gave to Barbarina to deliver to the Count, who was delighted at receiving it, thinking that Susanna meant to accept him as a lover after all.

Now, it happened that Figaro met Barbarina on her return from the Count, and gathered from her conversation that Susanna intended to meet her infatuated master that evening, and knowing nothing of the new plot that had been made, he imagined that she had

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been deceiving him all along, and jealously determined to watch her.

When twilight fell, the Countess and Susanna exchanged garments, and hastened to the secluded glade agreed upon, where Susanna presently retired beneath the trees, leaving her mistress in the open; and here they were immediately seen by Figaro, who was already hiding in the bushes.

By the merest chance, Cherubino, who had not yet departed, had also made an appointment in this same spot with little Barbarina, and seeing, as he imagined, Susanna approaching, he thought he might as well pass the waiting time by a little playful flirtation with the pretty lady's-maid. So, approaching the trembling Countess, whom he addressed as Susanna, he began to make pretty speeches to her, and even tried to snatch a kiss; but at that moment the Count suddenly appeared on the scene, and, boxing his ears smartly, made him beat a hasty retreat.

Also mistaking, in the twilight, the Countess for Susanna, Almaviva began to make love to her, and presently led her towards a summer pavilion; and then Susanna came out into the open once more, having caught sight of Figaro crouching amongst the bushes.

The angry *valet*, full of wild jealousy at the scene he had just witnessed, also emerged from his hiding-place, and began to pour forth his woes to the approaching lady, whom he imagined to be the Countess; but upon Susanna revealing herself, he was joyfully

relieved, and readily agreed to assist in her plan.

So when the Count shortly afterwards appeared alone, having left the pavilion for a few minutes to reconnoitre, Figaro fell on his knees before the pretended Countess, and began to make violent protestations of love for her ; and immediately the Count, rendered madly jealous at beholding what he supposed to be a clandestine meeting between his wife and a strange lover, rushed forward furiously, calling aloud for his attendants in the adjacent garden to seize the offender.

However, on discovering that the whole affair had been a hoax, his anger quickly evaporated, and realising that his wife had got the better of him, having detected him in an actual intrigue, he humbly besought her pardon, when she presently emerged from the pavilion.

This was readily granted by the Countess, who had been delighted to learn from her husband's wild outburst of jealousy that he still loved her in spite of his propensity for flirtation, of which she hoped she had at last cured him ; and since the mysteries and perplexities of the day had now been cleared away, all the plotters returned gaily to the castle, where the marriage ceremony of Figaro and Susanna at once took place, amidst great rejoicings.

DON JUAN

IT was night-time in Seville. A few distant lights were still calmly reflected in the peaceful river, but in the splendid palace of Don Pedro, the Commandant, darkness and silence reigned, for all the household had retired to rest. In the courtyard without, a stream of pale moonlight fell, outlining the stately building with ghostly clearness, and making the long dark shadows even deeper and more sombre still; and all was so quiet that not a sound was to be heard save the soft swaying of the trees when a stray breeze gently caught them.

Yet within the shadows, a man was crouching, vainly trying to find rest upon a hard stone seat, and though inwardly fretting and fuming, he did not betray his presence even by a sigh. For Leporello, confidential body-servant to Don Juan, the handsomest and most licentious cavalier in the whole of Seville, was quite used to midnight vigils, and many a dozen times had he kept watch in the chilly gloom without the walls of some fair lady's dwelling, whilst his gay, libertine master enjoyed a secret amour within. Us-

ally, the pair afterwards departed as quietly as they had come; but to-night this was not to be.

Suddenly, the stillness of the night was broken by loud shrieks coming from within the building, and next moment, Don Juan rushed from the palace out into the moonlit courtyard, closely pursued by a beautiful lady. This lady was Donna Anna, the only daughter of Don Pedro, the Commandant, who, discovering a strange cavalier in her chamber, had fled from him with shrieks of alarm; but when the intruder, fearing that her cries would arouse the household, had retreated to the courtyard, her courage had returned, and she had pursued him in order to discover his identity. She caught up with the retreating cavalier in the courtyard, and dragging at the dark cloak that enveloped him, she endeavoured vainly to scan his hidden features.

However, Don Juan roughly shook her off; but ere he had time to escape over the wall, Don Pedro, the Commandant, attracted thither by his daughter's shrieks, hastened out into the courtyard, with a drawn sword in his hand.

Quickly grasping the situation, the Commandant furiously challenged the intruder to combat, determined to defend the honour of his beloved child to his utmost. Don Juan, finding that there was no other escape for him, quickly crossed swords with his assailant, and being a fatal adept in such

encounters, he soon stretched Don Pedro dead at his feet.

The servant Leporello, who had prudently remained in hiding during the whole scene, now came from the shadows, and the pair hastily made their escape over the wall.

Meanwhile, Donna Anna had rushed back to the palace to bring assistance to her father; but when, on returning to the courtyard with her betrothed lover, Don Octavio, and several sleepy servants, she found that her beloved parent was already dead, she uttered a terrible shriek, and fell fainting upon his prostrate body.

Full of grief, Don Octavio gently restored the poor girl to consciousness once more, comforting her with tender words, and bidding her regard him as her protector; and then, as the servants bore the dead Commandant back to the palace, Anna implored her betrothed to swear that he would aid her in bringing vengeance upon the murderer of her father. Gladly Don Octavio gave his word, and there, in the courtyard beneath the moonlit sky, the lovers registered their solemn vow.

Meanwhile, Don Juan and his servant had escaped to a lonely inn on the borders of his own estate, which lay just outside the walls of the city, and next morning, the gay cavalier, hardened by long indulgence in vice, and utterly regardless of the crime he had committed the night before, came jauntily forth into the courtyard, thinking

only of conquests still in store for him. It was in vain that Leporello, who occasionally had qualms of conscience, warned his master that his evil course would sooner or later bring fell disaster upon him; for Don Juan cared not for the consequences of his sins, so long as he could satisfy his inborn craving for evil pleasure.

So, on coming forth from the inn, and seeing a veiled and cloaked lady, evidently a traveller, in the courtyard, he withdrew with Leporello behind some trees to watch her unobserved. As the lady drew near, she wrung her hands in distress, and from a few incoherent sentences uttered as she passed, the hidden watchers gathered that she had been abandoned by some false lover whom she angrily sought, in order to avenge herself upon him.

Don Juan now stepped forward with his usual gallant air, and accosted her; but as the young lady flung back her veil, he recognised, to his dismay, the features of a beautiful lady of Burgos, Donna Elvira, whom he had but recently betrayed and cast aside.

Instantly recognising the recreant lover who had so cruelly abandoned her, Donna Elvira began to pour forth bitter reproaches upon him; but Don Juan, callously familiar with such scenes, pushed forward Leporello, bidding him explain matters to the lady.

Then, as Donna Elvira eagerly approached the servant for his explanation, the heartless cavalier slily made his escape; and when the

poor lady presently turned impatiently from the vapid string of empty words uttered pompously by the experienced Leporello, she found that her expected prey had vanished. Bidding her be of good comfort, since she was neither the first nor the last of his master's numberless victims, Leporello now produced a book from his pocket, in which he had written the names of all the fair maidens who had been basely deceived in similar fashion, and having thus proved that she shared her abandoned position with many others, the servant suddenly took to his heels and ran away down the country road that led to Don Juan's estate.

For a few moments, Elvira remained stunned, for she had loved Don Juan with her whole heart, willingly yielding herself to his embraces and insinuating temptations, and trusting fondly to his false promises; but now, dishonoured, betrayed, abandoned, she at last saw him in his true colours—a heartless libertine. Full of grief and rage, she determined to avenge herself for her outraged affections and ruined life, and knowing that her betrayer's residence was in the neighbourhood, she hurried along the road taken by Leporello.

When Don Juan arrived at his palace he found that great revels were being held by the peasants on the estates, in honour of the betrothal of a pair of rustic lovers; and seeing that the bride-elect, Zerlina, was an extremely pretty maiden, the gay lord of

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the soil determined to amuse himself with her.

Consequently, when Leporello presently arrived (having taken a short cut from the road), he bade him conduct all the peasants immediately to the palace, and entertain them with feasting and dancing within the banquet-hall and garden, whispering an injunction to keep the future bridegroom, Masetto, specially occupied.

As the merry rustics, eager for such an unexpected treat, trooped away willingly to the palace, Don Juan detained the pretty Zerlina, and putting his arm round her waist, and whispering honied words of admiration and flattery, he endeavoured to lead her aside to a secluded woodland glade.

The simple Zerlina, accustomed only to the clumsy love-making of a rustic clown, was greatly impressed by the ardent glances and sweet persuasive caresses of the great lord ; and when Don Juan, declaring passionately that she should become his bride and never be wed to the boor, Masetto, presently led her to a small summer pavilion which he said should be her home, she gave way to the dazzling charm of the moment, and suffered herself to be led away with a beating heart.

But just at this moment, Donna Elvira, who, having found her way into the grounds, had watched and overheard the whole of this pretty scene, rushed forward, and dragging Zerlina to one side, she explained to her

that Don Juan was but an evil deceiver, who meant to ruin her. Zerlina, full of horror, shrank back ashamed, and Elvira, throwing a glance of scorn at the faithless gallant, put a protecting arm round the frightened girl, and drew her gently away.

As the discomfited Don Juan turned angrily aside, he encountered a lady in deep mourning and a cavalier, who had just entered the grounds; and as he greeted them, he saw, to his dismay, that they were Donna Anna and her betrothed, Don Octavio. However, Anna did not at first recognise in him her father's midnight slayer, and having come with her lover to ask Don Juan's help in finding the villain who had brought such misery upon her, the pair quickly made known their quest, and the double-dealing cavalier promised to give them his aid.

But whilst they were thus talking together, Donna Elvira returned, and declaring earnestly to the strangers that Don Juan was a false villain, she implored them not to place any faith in his promises. Don Juan, coolly announcing that Elvira was a mad-woman, pretended to try and soothe her frenzy; but the poor lady, stung by this fresh outrage, reiterated her knowledge of his sins, and then, fearing she would not be believed, hurried away.

Don Juan, glad to escape, followed her by another path, saying that he wished to see she did herself no harm; and when he had gone, Donna Anna, who had been watching

him constantly, declared to her betrothed that she now knew it was Don Juan who had been her would-be ravisher, and the murderer of her beloved father, since his agitated voice and angry gestures when disturbed by Elvira had betrayed him.

Full of horror that they had thus unwittingly sought help from the very villain they wished to punish, the lovers hurried after the retreating Elvira, whom they soon overtook; and after having listened to the sad story she had to tell of herself, the three determined to bring retribution on Don Juan, and to begin their scheme by exposing him as a villain before his own assembled guests that night. Having returned to the inn, they disguised themselves in long black dominoes and half-masks, and then when darkness fell they made their way back to the palace grounds, where they were soon seen by Leporello and invited to enter the great hall.

Meanwhile, the sly Leporello had also enticed back the timid Zerlina to the revels, and more than once, Don Juan had tried to draw her away with him. But the rustic lover, Masetto, was jealous and suspicious of the great lord's attentions to his pretty sweetheart, and several times during the afternoon he had lain in wait behind bushes and stepped out in time to prevent a stolen interview. Zerlina tried to soothe him with her pretty coaxing ways, feeling that her high-born cavalier merely admired her, and

meant her no harm ; but later on she was undeceived.

The revels were to end in a masked ball at night, and as soon as darkness fell, the delighted peasants, all decked in dominoes and masks, trooped gaily into the palace once more, to dance and feast in the banquet-hall.

Don Juan, gorgeously attired, moved authoritatively about the gilded salons, ordering every kind of comfort and delight for his lively guests ; but all the while he kept a watchful eye upon the pretty Zerlina, determined to gratify his sudden passion for her that evening. At last his opportunity occurred, and having bidden Leporello keep Masetto occupied for a short time, he secured Zerlina as a partner in the dance, and in its mazy movements sought to draw her into a private inner room.

Donna Anna and her two companions watched this manœuvre with anger in their hearts, and when Don Juan's fell purpose presently became patent to all, they pulled off their masks and denounced him before his own guests as a base villain, relating the many evil things they knew of him.

Masetto, now roused to fury, rushed boldly forward to attack his enemy, calling on his friends to help him, but Don Juan quickly drew his sword, and clearing a way for himself, managed to make his escape.

Seeing that their prey had slipped through their grasp once more, Donna Anna and her betrothed returned to the city ; and shortly

afterwards Elvira also took up her abode in Seville, hiring a house, and taking Zerlina with her as her maid.

Here, however, as the weeks went on, they were again discovered by the irrepressible Don Juan, and, still determined to carry on his amour with the pretty peasant girl, the gay cavalier repaired one dark evening to the courtyard of Elvira's house, where he hastily exchanged outer garments with his servant, Leporello.

When Elvira presently appeared at an open window, Don Juan from the darkness below called softly to her, declaring that he loved her yet, and begging her to come down and receive his caresses once more. The susceptible Elvira, who still loved her false sweetheart in spite of her better judgment, could not long resist this tender invitation, and presently she came out into the courtyard, and fell into the arms of Leporello, who, wrapped in his master's cloak and hat, she took for Don Juan.

Then, taking fright at a noise purposely made by the real Don Juan, she allowed herself to be hurried out into the street beyond by the disguised Leporello.

Having thus secured the courtyard to himself, Don Juan began to sing a serenade to Zerlina, whom he knew was within the house; but he was almost immediately set upon by Masetto and a party of rustics, who had been closely following on his track ever since the night of the ball.

However, seeing that his assailants quickly recognised Leporello's garments and regarded him as the servant, Don Juan kept up the pretence, and professing sympathy with their cause, soon sent the rustics off in another direction on a wild-goose chase after their enemy; and then, having enticed Masetto to remain behind under pretence of inspecting his weapons, he presently struck the poor peasant a stunning blow and rushed off leaving him helpless on the ground.

Zerlina, attracted by the noise, now came forth from the house and helped the fallen man to rise; and recognising her lover with joy, she comforted him as best she could and afterwards accompanied him down the street in search of his companions.

Meanwhile, Elvira and the disguised Leporello had sought refuge in the courtyard outside the house of Donna Anna; and here they were presently discovered by Anna herself, who came out from the building to walk in the cool evening air with her betrothed, Don Octavio. Leporello tried to escape, but being met at the entrance by Masetto and Zerlina, who were passing at that moment, he was immediately set upon by them, and in order to protect himself, was compelled to reveal his true identity.

It was now evident to Donna Anna and her lover that Don Juan was still in the neighbourhood, and as they had already proved him to be the midnight assassin of the Commandant, Don Octavio declared

that he would at once seek out the officers of Justice, and seize the base cavalier in his own palace that very night.

When Don Octavio had hurried away to carry out this purpose, Leporello tried to make his escape ; but he was seen by Zerlina, who quickly pursued and caught him, owing him a grudge for having, as she supposed, belaboured her lover. Flourishing before him a razor she had secured from Donna Anna's palace, she bade him sit down in a stone seat near by ; and when, in fear for his life, he had meekly done so, she firmly bound him hand and foot to the seat, and left him in a sorry plight.

For some time Leporello writhed and struggled vainly to free himself, but at length, to his joy, a peasant came by, and in answer to his cries, cut the cords that bound him.

Full of aches and pains, Leporello went off in search of his master, whom he found in an open square before the Cathedral of Seville, and approaching him with a woeful limp, he declared to the waiting cavalier in aggrieved tones that he had been half-killed in his service.

Don Juan, however, only laughed at him, and being in a very gay mood, he immediately began to tell his grumbling servant of several other lively adventures he had just experienced in pursuit of pretty maidens.

Now in the centre of the square a splendid equestrian statue in marble had already

been erected to the memory of the late Commandant, Don Pedro, bearing upon its pedestal the following inscription:

"I HEREWITH AWAIT THE VENGEANCE
DECREED BY HEAVEN UNTO THE WRETCH
WHO SLEW ME!"

Whilst Don Juan was in the midst of his gay story, a sound of muffled words seemed to come from the Statue, and Leporello, full of terror, fell on his knees, trembling. Don Juan, however, bade him read out the inscription on the pedestal, and when the frightened servant had done so, he next gaily bade him invite the Statue to his palace for supper that night.

But, overcome by superstitious fears, Leporello could not find courage to do so, and it was not until his master threatened to thrust his sword through him that he at length uttered aloud the invitation he had been bidden to give. The Statue immediately bowed its head in response to the invitation, to the increasing alarm of Leporello, who uttered a loud shriek, but Don Juan, laughingly declaring that the Statue's movement was only fancy, dragged the quaking servant away, and repaired at once to his palace.

It so happened that the gay cavalier was indeed holding a splendid supper party that night, having invited a number of beautiful ladies to feast with him; and on arriving at the palace, he found his guests already assembled. He joined them at the table at

once, whilst Leporello began to wait on the party, and in a short time, the palace was filled with the sounds of music and revelry.

But suddenly, in the very midst of the feast, Donna Elvira appeared in the banquet-hall; for, still having a spark of love left in her heart for her false lover, she had come to warn him of his approaching danger, and to entreat him to repent whilst he still had time. But Don Juan, now recklessly hilarious, only laughed aloud at her entreaties, and Elvira, full of angry despair, declared she should now leave him to his fate.

But just as she reached the door she uttered a terrific shriek, which was quickly taken up by others near the entrance; for coming up the stairs with heavy, measured tread, they saw the Statue of the late Don Pedro, on foot, with a fierce look of righteous wrath upon its marble face!

Full of terror, the ladies fled from the room, whilst Leporello hid beneath the supper-table, and when the Statue presently entered the banquet-hall, all the lights suddenly burnt dim, and gradually went out altogether.

Don Juan stared at his strange visitor in utter astonishment, and demanded its business; and when the Statue of the Commandant replied in sepulchral tones that it had come to the feast in answer to his own invitation, the gay host attempted to regain his self-possession, and ordered Leporello to lay the table afresh.

But as Leporello crawled forth from his

hiding-place, the Statue declared that, as a dweller in Heaven, it needed not mortal food ; and turning to Don Juan, it said : "Thou badst me to thy banquet, and I, in turn, now invite thee to mine ! Wilt come ?"

Leporello implored his master to refuse, but Don Juan, scorning to show fear, recklessly accepted at once, and took the outstretched hand of his visitor in pledge of the compact. But when the icy-cold fingers of the Statue closed on his own in a grip like that of a vice, a shiver of intense fear passed through the whole frame of the cavalier, and feeling that his last hour had come, he struggled vainly to free himself. But the Statue only held him the tighter, and in deep, solemn tones, it bade him repent, ere Heaven's sentence was passed upon him.

But Don Juan, though full of mortal fear, scorned repentance, and in spite of the entreaties of Leporello, and the further injunctions of the Statue, he still passionately shrieked out his defiance. Then the Statue in an appalling voice declared that his doom was passed, and letting its victim's hand drop, it suddenly sank through the flooring into the ground below.

At the same moment, fierce flames sprang up on all sides, and from the deep abyss that had just engulfed the Statue, a host of demons rushed forth and seized Don Juan in their scorching grasp. It was in vain that the wretched man shrieked and struggled in their embrace, for in spite of

his frantic efforts to free himself, they quickly overcame him, and sprang back into the fiery abyss, dragging their victim with them.

Then the flames died away, and the chasm closed; and when, next moment, Don Octavio entered with his friends and the officers of Justice, the banquet-hall had assumed its usual aspect once more.

But justice had already overtaken the offender they sought; and when Leporello presently described in trembling accents the visit of the Commandant's Statue, and the terrible doom that had overtaken his wicked master, all declared that vengeance was satisfied, since the Statue had fulfilled its vow.

Zerlina and Masetto now agreed to be married the very next day, and Donna Anna, since her father's death was at last avenged, smiled upon her faithful lover and placed her hand in his, declaring that happiness might now be theirs.



GOUNOD

FAUST

IN a certain city of Germany, during the early years of the sixteenth century, a lonely student sat in his laboratory late one night, musing on the vanity of all human knowledge, and railing at the powerlessness of man to unravel the secret mysteries of Nature.

He was an old man, who had spent the whole of his life in the quest of learning; and not without considerable success, for Faust the Alchemist, the laborious student of magic and mystery, the seeker-out of hidden wonders, had gained much repute amongst his fellows, and was even looked upon with awe.

But the accumulation of knowledge had brought no satisfaction to his soul, for the magic powers he sought were still withheld from him; and now, as the old man sat in his silent chamber, lonely and unloved, he felt that his ceaseless toil had been in vain, since in the pursuit of learning he had let the joys and beauties of life pass him by, and nothing but disappointment remained. Of what use, he thought despairingly, was

all his vaunted knowledge, when it could not bring back to him his lost youth, with its faith, its enthusiastic glow, its raptures, its ambitions, and its fond dreams of hope and happiness?

Filled with sudden rage at the impotency of the vain learning he had sacrificed his precious youth to attain, the old man seized a goblet containing a poisonous draught, and, determined to live no longer, he was just about to drain its contents, when the song of a band of merry peasants on their way to the fields—for day was now dawning—arrested him in the fatal act.

Faust put down the goblet with a shaking hand and listened to the fresh young voices of the peasants, which unconsciously brought back to him the desire to live; but finding that their song was all of love, hope, and prayer, he fell into another paroxysm of rage, and called wildly on the powers of evil to come to his aid.

Instantly there was a flash of unearthly light, and a terrific crash of thunder, and the Prince of Evil himself stood before him!

Affrighted at this sudden answer to his rash invocation, Faust shrank back in horror; but the Demon, who, clad in brilliant red garments, with a flashing sword at his side, had taken on the form of a gallant of the period, under the name of Mephistopheles, approached his intended

victim, and demanded of him in mocking tones what he desired. Did he want gold? Or glory? Or a kingdom?

The old man shook his head, for none of these things had any charm for him, and he still feared his awful visitor; but at last, tempted by the one fierce desire still left to him, he could restrain himself no longer, and passionately implored the Demon to bring back to him his lost youth, with all its entrancing delights and capacities for sweet enjoyment.

Mephistopheles replied that he had power to grant his wish, and could instantly restore him to a glorious youth; but for one price only would he do this thing—the price of Faust's own soul! As he spoke, the Demon drew forth a parchment, and requested the old man to sign it, that it might be an agreement between them; but Faust hastily drew back, hesitating to enter into such a dreadful compact.

Then Mephistopheles, seeing that further temptation was needed before he could gain his ends, caused by his supernatural power a wonderful vision to appear; and it seemed to Faust that the walls of his chamber suddenly melted away, and that in their place he beheld, as in a picture, a beautiful village maiden, who sat spinning beside a cottage door. The angelic looks of this lovely maiden filled the heart of Faust with a passionate desire to possess her, and upon the Demon assuring him that this wish

should also be gratified if he would agree to his terms, the old man seized his pen and recklessly signed the parchment.

The vision slowly faded away, and then the Demon, taking from the table the discarded poison goblet—the contents of which he had hastily changed into a magic potion—bade his now secured prey to swallow the draught.

Faust eagerly did so, and immediately he was transformed from an old man into a handsome youth of noble appearance, with quick young blood flowing through his veins, and a heart throbbing with impulsive feeling and enjoyment of life. He found himself splendidly clad in the rich garments of a noble, and plentifully supplied with gold, and, determined to make the most of the pleasures now brought once again within his grasp, the rejuvenated Faust sallied forth with his evil companion. For Mephistopheles had no intention of leaving his victim until the time came to claim him for his own, and upon Faust impatiently desiring to make the acquaintance of the lovely maiden shown him in the vision, the cunning Demon, eager to lead him further astray in the paths of evil, took him at once to the picturesque old city of Nuremberg, where the fair object of his passion dwelt in innocence and peace.

As the two strangers made their way into Nuremberg, they found that a fair was being held there, and in the fair-ground at

the entrance to the town a very lively scene was taking place. Gay students, pretty maidens, old men, and prim matrons, all clad in holiday attire, were laughing, chattering, and bargaining on every side, and a group of soldiers, just about to depart for the wars, were standing under the trees outside a quaint old inn, drinking a gay farewell to their citizen friends.

Amongst these soldiers was a young man named Valentine, who alone appeared grave amidst the merry throng, and on being rallied by his careless companions for his dull spirits, he told them that his heart was heavy at the thought of leaving behind him his orphan sister, Margarita, a beautiful and virtuous young maiden, who, though placed in the charge of a worthy woman, would be left many months without a brother's loving care. Upon hearing this, a fair youth named Siebel, who, though scarcely more than a boy, had already the dauntless spirit of a man, came forward and declared enthusiastically that *he* would guard and watch over Margarita as a brother, in his stead; and Valentine, somewhat comforted by this assurance, pressed his young friend's hand gratefully, and joined in the parting merriment of his companions.

Whilst the soldiers were thus singing songs together and drinking their farewell bumpers, Mephistopheles suddenly joined the group, and declared that he would sing them a song also; and though the revellers shrank back

instinctively from the evil-looking stranger, they felt themselves powerless to resist his mocking tone of command.

When the song came to an end, Mephistopheles began to foretell certain events in the lives of those present, and seeing a look of scorn and horror in the eyes of young Siebel, who unconsciously felt the dark stranger to be an enemy, he seized the youth's hand, and pronounced that every flower he touched henceforth should instantly wither and die.

Then, declaring that the wine offered to him was not worthy of the name, he struck with his sword a little cask surmounted by an effigy of Bacchus, which served as a sign to the inn, and instantly there gushed forth a stream of rich wine, with which the revellers quickly filled their cups.

But no sooner had they swallowed the strange fluid than they felt it coursing through their veins and mounting to the brain like liquid fire, and Mephistopheles, laughing sardonically at their amazement and discomfiture, filled a goblet himself, and drank it off to the health of "Fair Margarita!"

Enraged at hearing the name of his pure young sister thus lightly uttered by the sinister, fortune-telling stranger, Valentine resentfully drew his sword and rushed upon him, followed by Siebel and the other gallants standing about; but Mephistopheles quickly drew a circle around him with the point of his weapon, and his assailants then found

themselves powerless, since their swords instantly snapped in half when thrust within the magic circle. Seeing that infernal powers were being used against them, the gallants held up aloft the hilts of their swords, and before the Sign of the Cross, the Demon cringed abjectly, and was compelled to retire.

The soldiers now made their final farewells, and went off to join the departing regiment; and soon after they had gone, Mephistopheles again appeared with Faust, who was by this time all eagerness to see the fair object of his vision. In answer to his oft-repeated, impatient demand, Mephistopheles at last pointed to a fair-haired maiden now approaching them with a slow step and down-cast eyes—a maiden of exquisite beauty, with all the charms of guileless innocence and perfect faith.

It was Margarita, the beloved sister of Valentine; and as Faust gazed upon her, he recognised with rapture the form and features of the lovely maiden shown to him by the Demon in his laboratory.

Hurrying forward with delight, he bowed gracefully, and begged to be allowed to escort her to her home; but Margarita was accustomed to treat the advances of gallants with coldness, and so, though her heart throbbed with sudden joy as she met the ardent gaze of the handsome stranger, she replied modestly that she was but a humble maiden who needed no such escort. She then passed quietly on her way, and the

discomfited Faust gazed after her with eyes of passionate admiration and tender longing, for an uncontrollable love for the sweet maiden was already surging in his heart.

Mephistopheles determined to foster and encourage this passion, hoping to secure by means of it a second victim in the unconscious Margarita, whose innocent soul he longed to destroy, and late that evening, when darkening shadows were beginning to fall, he led the willing Faust to the humble cottage where the fair maiden dwelt.

As they approached the flower-laden garden, the young Siebel came forth and passed down the street; for this enthusiastic youth also loved Margarita, and came to leave flowers for her every evening. On this particular evening, however, he had had a strange experience, for each flower he plucked had withered in his hand, and remembering the words of the mysterious stranger he had met in the afternoon, he had been filled with dismay. But suddenly he bethought himself to dip his fingers in a little bowl of holy water that was placed within the porch of Margarita's cottage, and then, to his joy, he found that the curse was powerless, and that the blossoms he gathered after this act remained fresh. So laying his offering as usual upon a seat outside the porch, he came away; and immediately afterwards Faust and Mephistopheles entered the garden.

Noticing Siebel's flowers upon the rustic

seat, Mephistopheles produced a casket of valuable jewels and placed it beside them; and then he withdrew with Faust into the shadows, to watch the result.

Presently the lovely Margarita came forth into the garden with a pensive air; for she was thinking of the handsome young cavalier who had accosted her in the afternoon, and whose passionate glances of admiration had thrilled her through and through, and set her maiden heart throbbing so wildly. She soon noticed poor Siebel's flowers, and tenderly laid them aside with an indulgent smile, and then seeing the strange casket, she took it up wonderingly and opened it.

An exclamation of childish delight escaped her on beholding the dazzling jewels within, and unable to resist the temptation of adorning herself with them, she tremblingly clasped the pretty baubles about her snowy neck and arms. A little mirror had been artfully laid within the casket, and as she gazed at the reflection of herself thus loaded with glittering gems and ropes of priceless pearls, she wondered what her noble gallant would think if only he could behold her now, adorned as a princess.

Just then Dame Martha, the worthy, but not very vigilant, guardian in whose charge Margarita had been left during her brother's absence at the wars, came forth from the cottage, and admiring the sparkling jewels—which Margarita, now ashamed of her momentary vanity, endeavoured to remove

—she declared they must have been sent by some noble adorer.

At this moment Faust and Mephistopheles came forth from the shadows to which they had retreated, and the latter, declaring to Martha that he had important news for her, soon enticed the dame, with many flattering phrases, to leave her precious charge and wander with him to one side.

Left alone with Margarita, Faust approached the beautiful maiden eagerly, and, unable to control his feelings any longer, passionately declared his love for her; and Margarita, though she resisted his advances for some time, at length gave way to the answering love in her own heart, and resigned herself to the tender embraces of the handsome cavalier.

After this the enraptured lovers frequently met; for the fiendish Mephistopheles continually encouraged and aided Faust in his passionate but lawless pursuit of Margarita, never once relaxing his demoniacal temptations until the ruin of the poor girl was assured, and her innocence destroyed.

The joys of a rapturous love were not long permitted to the betrayed Margarita, for as the months went on, and her dishonour became known, she had to submit to the scorn and sneers of her old companions, who showed little pity for the frailty of one whose virtue had always been held up to them as a pattern; and all avoided her, except the faithful Siebel, who still sought to bring

comfort to the gentle maiden whom a true and tender love had led astray.

Full of grief and remorse, Margarita sought refuge in prayer and repentance; but even in the church, the mocking Demon, whose cruel temptation she had been unable to resist, would find her out, and fill her heart with fear and despair.

It was whilst Margarita was praying one evening in the church near her humble cottage home that the soldiers returned from the wars; and the brave Valentine—who had covered himself with glory in the campaign—upon arriving in the town, at once set off to receive the praises and greetings of his beloved sister.

At the door of the cottage, however, he was met by the unhappy Siebel, from whose agitated words he quickly learnt of what had happened during his absence; and full of grief and anger, he rushed within, to pour forth reproaches upon the erring sister who had thus brought a stain upon his name.

Siebel ran to the church to acquaint Margarita with her brother's return, and no sooner had he gone than Mephistopheles appeared with Faust, who was still unable to keep away from the fair maiden he had betrayed.

He was, however, sad and remorseful, and it was his evil companion who, to entice Margarita from her chamber, struck a guitar and sang a light serenade beneath the window.

When the song came to an end, Valentine

rushed out from the cottage, sword in hand, and knowing that the betrayer of his sister stood before him, he challenged Faust to combat. Instantly, their blades clashed together, and Faust, aided by the diabolical intervention of Mephistopheles, quickly overcame his opponent, and Valentine fell to the ground mortally wounded.

At this moment, Siebel and Margarita came forth from the church, and seeing what had happened, the wretched maiden, with a loud cry of woe, flung herself upon the prostrate body of her brother, beseeching him to have mercy, and pardon her. But Valentine roughly flung her from him, declaring that her sin had slain him; and with his last breath he cursed her passionately, as he fell back lifeless.

Horror-stricken at this awful calamity, of which she was the cause, the unhappy Margarita was filled with unutterable grief and despair, and her already harassed mind giving way under the weight of woe now fallen upon it, in a sudden fit of mad frenzy she took the life of the poor babe who was soon afterwards born to her. For this terrible, though unconscious act, she was immediately flung into prison and condemned to death; but even as she lay in the gloomy cell awaiting execution, her weary soul, worn out with suffering and grief, was already preparing to leave its earthly abode.

Faust was now filled with remorse and despair for the sad fate the gratification of

his selfish passion had brought upon the beautiful maiden who had loved him so tenderly, and on the night before the execution, aided by Mephistopheles, he gained access to her cell, and eagerly besought her to fly with him.

But at first Margarita, whose mind was still wandering, scarcely heeded what was said to her, and then, as her thoughts grew clearer, and her gaze suddenly fell on the sinister form of Mephistopheles, who looked upon her exultingly with eyes like coals of fire, she realised the danger of this new temptation to return to a life of sin, and spurned her lover's offer.

Before the return of Valentine she had begun to place her reliance in prayer and repentance, and now these holier feelings once more gained the ascendancy over her, and she fell upon her knees to pray. It was in vain that the despairing Faust implored her to escape with him, and the exulting Demon tempted her to yield; and at last, with a final prayer for pardon and mercy, she fell back upon her wretched couch, and expired at their feet.

Mephistopheles uttered a cry of fiendish triumph, but at that moment a chorus of angelic voices was heard proclaiming forgiveness for the repentant sinner, whose faithful prayers had reached the Mercy-Seat on High.

Faust, awed and overcome with sorrow, sank to his knees in prayer, and as the

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Evil Spirit, thus balked of his expected prey, shrank back defeated, the prison walls opened, and the released and ransomed soul of Margarita was borne upwards to its celestial home.

MARITANA

TOWARDS the end of the seventeenth century, when Charles II. was reigning in Spain, a wandering tribe of gipsies appeared in the romantic city of Madrid, and every day they were to be seen in the streets and public squares, amusing the light-hearted populace with their merry songs and dances.

With this tribe there came a beautiful young girl, named Maritana, who possessed a voice of wonderful charm and sweetness, and in a very short time the enchanting singing and fair looks of the pretty gipsy-maiden had won the hearts of all. Every day Maritana sang and danced before delighted crowds, and even the Queen, as she drove by with her ladies, would stop her state carriage to listen for a few moments to the pretty Gitana's thrilling voice.

Now, when the gay young King of Spain, Charles II., beheld Maritana for the first time he was so struck with her dazzling beauty that he determined to see her again; and several times he went disguised into the streets of the city, mingling with the

crowds that applauded the gipsy-maid, in order to gain acquaintance with her.

On one of these occasions he was seen and recognised, in spite of his disguise, by the Chief Minister of State, Don Jose de Santarem, and this wily nobleman, understanding at once that his royal master was infatuated with the charms of the fair Maritana, quickly decided, in order to serve his own ends, to do all in his power to aid the King in his pursuit of the maiden.

For a long while Don Jose had secretly loved the cold and stately Queen, whom the pleasure-loving King had already begun to neglect; but so far, all his efforts to gain her favour had proved in vain, for the proud, exalted lady refused even to smile upon him. But the sight of the disguised King paying court to the pretty gipsy gave rise to a sudden scheme in the busy brain of the unscrupulous Minister. He would encourage this temporary infatuation, and convert Maritana to the purposes of the King's unrestrained passion, and then, once the Queen was persuaded of her husband's faithlessness, might she not be persuaded to look for a lover herself, as a means of avenging her wrongs? And that lover should be Don Jose de Santarem!

Fully determined to carry out this base plan, Don Jose himself went up to Maritana and began to make pretty speeches to her, praising her beauty and lovely voice, and having observed that the disguised King

had slipped gold into her hand, he also gave her a piece of money of the same value, and begged her to sing him another song. Delighted at gaining two pieces of gold in one day, Maritana was glad enough to sing, and when the song came to an end she talked merrily to the Minister, telling him that she longed to be a great lady and to live in dazzling halls, drive in a gilded coach, and wear fine clothes and glittering jewels.

Pleased to find that his intended victim had just such longings and ambitions as would serve him in his schemes regarding her, Don Jose declared that all these things she desired might indeed be hers, since her own wondrous beauty could easily win them; and he added that if she would trust her fortunes to him, he would quickly make her a great lady,

Maritana merrily replied that she would gladly accept any such good fortune he might offer her, and then she ran off to sing and dance in another street.

No sooner had she gone out of the square than a handsome, but dissipated-looking roysterer, whose once gay garments and general appearance showed signs of poverty and riotous living, and yet who preserved a certain dignity and charm of manner, issued forth from a tavern close by, declaring to the bystanders that he had just lost his last coin to gamblers; and Don Jose, to his surprise, recognised in this shabby, yet

debonnair stranger, an old friend of his boyhood's days, Don Cæsar de Bazan, a nobleman of equal rank with himself.

He went up at once and renewed acquaintance with him, and Don Cæsar, who was of a sunny-hearted, careless disposition, related to his old friend the reasons for his present poverty, declaring candidly that gay living and generosity to friends had quickly run through the fine fortune he had inherited, and that in order to escape from his numerous creditors, he was compelled to travel about from place to place.

As it was now some years since he had been in Madrid, he asked if there was any news in the city; and Don Jose replied: "None. Except that the King has issued an edict against duelling, declaring that every survivor of a duel shall be shot, unless it take place in Holy Week, when he is to be hanged instead."

Now Don Cæsar was an expert duellist, and celebrated for the number of his encounters, so on hearing this news, he said with a laugh and shrug of his shoulders: "Why, then, I must avoid a quarrel, for it is Holy Week now, and it would be a dire dishonour for the last of my race to be hanged!"

At this moment there was a loud outcry, and a boatman rushed into the square, dragging with him a wretched youth whom he had just rescued from attempting to drown himself, and close upon his heels followed the Captain of the Guard, into

whose hands he was about to deliver the culprit to be brought up for justice.

But the poor boy, whose name was Lazarillo, begged wildly to be set free, declaring that a harsh master's ill-treatment had made him long to destroy himself, but that he would make no more attempts if he could be saved from punishment; and on hearing his pitiful story and sad cries, Don Cæsar, who had a tender and generous heart, hastened to his assistance and freed him from his captor.

The Captain of the Guard angrily commanded this unexpected champion to instantly deliver the boy up to justice, that he might be punished for his offence; but Don Cæsar, indignant at being thus addressed by one whom he deemed his inferior, drew his sword and haughtily declared that he meant to protect the helpless youth.

A hot quarrel now ensued, and a few minutes later the two were engaged in a duel, despite Don Jose's repeated warnings about the King's edict, and the special penalty of Holy Week. Don Cæsar, with a few skilful strokes, easily despatched his adversary, but before he had time to escape to a place of safety he was surrounded and captured by the city guards, who quickly bore him off to the prison-house. Here he was thrown into a cell, together with the poor youth whose cause he had championed so recklessly, and who now refused to leave him, and having thus flagrantly gone against the

King's edict, he was immediately condemned to death, and sentenced to be hanged next morning at seven o'clock.

Now Don Jose de Santarem, instead of being grieved at the terrible misfortune that had befallen the friend of his boyhood, at first cared naught about the matter; and then, suddenly seeing in this very incident a means of helping on his own evil schemes, he determined to make a strange offer to the doomed man. If only he could wed the beautiful Gitana to Don Cæsar de Bazan within the next few hours, all his plans would go well; for as the widow of a Grandee of Spain, Maritana would be entitled to a high position at Court, and thus be brought into daily contact with the King, who would then be constantly under the spell of her fascinating beauty.

Having carefully laid his plans with great cunning, the wily Minister repaired to the prison-house at five o'clock next morning, and armed with all authority as the King's Chief Minister, he made his way to the Count's cell, and entered. He found Don Cæsar already awake, and talking cheerfully to the young Lazarillo in his usual gay and careless manner, quite regardless of his quickly-approaching end, and hurrying forward, he greeted him pleasantly, saying he had come to serve him.

Don Cæsar replied merrily that there was little in which a dying man could be served, but he added that he should be glad if the

Minister would take the boy, Lazarillo, into his service, as he felt an interest in his fate. Don Jose readily agreed to this, and next he cunningly asked if the Count were satisfied to die the death of a dog by hanging—the death meted out to outcasts and low-born rogues.

The haughty family pride of Don Cæsar was stung by this subtle taunt, for it was galling to him beyond measure to thus bring disgrace upon his ancient name, and he eagerly besought his old friend to entreat the King to grant him the privilege of being shot instead of hanged, as befitted a noble of Spain.

Then Don Jose announced that he could quickly obtain him this favour, but only on condition that he married before his execution, and that he asked no questions whatever about his bride, who would be thickly veiled; and Don Cæsar, glad to secure a soldier's death even upon such strange terms as these, willingly agreed, and at once retired to a small inner chamber to dress himself in the handsome wedding garments the Minister had already ordered to be brought there. He also requested that his guards and executioners might be permitted to join him in his last meal, and Don Jose, delighted at the success of his scheme, at once gave orders for a fine feast to be served immediately, after which he hurried away to find Maritana.

Just as he was leaving the prison, a sealed packet was handed to him, and

opening it, he found that it was a free pardon for Don Cæsar from the King. Knowing that this unexpected circumstance would spoil all his fine plans, the merciless Minister determined that the pardon should not arrive at the prison until *after* the execution, and thrusting the document within the folds of his tunic, to be forwarded later, he went on his way.

Although still so early in the morning, he soon found Maritana already singing gaily amidst the gipsy camp, and drawing her to one side, he whispered that he had come to offer her a splendid position, a fine house, and great riches, on condition that she agreed to be married immediately to a high-born noble of Spain, Don Cæsar de Bazan.

On hearing that such a brilliant marriage, which more than fulfilled her highest ambitions, was in store for her, Maritana clapped her hands joyfully, for though she had seen the capture of Don Cæsar the day before, and had even pleaded for his release, she had not heard his name spoken, and knew nought of his death-sentence; but when Don Jose added that for certain State reasons he could not explain to her she must go through the ceremony thickly veiled, and not behold her bridegroom until some days afterwards, she grew suspicious, and said she did not like such mystery.

Then the cunning Minister, to relieve her

fears, said that it was the express command of the Queen that she should go through this ceremony and obey all his directions, however strange they might seem ; and on hearing this, Maritana, who was grateful to the Queen for noticing her singing in the streets, now willingly gave her consent, thinking that even such an unusual marriage as this must be right if it was the royal lady's command. So she allowed herself to be dressed in a wedding robe, and so heavily veiled as to be completely blindfolded ; and as soon as she was ready, Don Jose took her to the prison-house, together with a priest.

It was now about six o'clock, and they found Don Cæsar already carousing merrily with the very soldiers who were to shoot him an hour later. The doomed man was quite in his usual good spirits, and determined to enjoy the last minutes of his life ; but the boy, Lazarillo, was sad, and refused to join in the feast. Such a strong feeling of gratitude and love for his generous, light-hearted protector had sprung up within the youth's heart that he could not bear to think of his quickly-approaching death, and he longed to discover some means of saving him. As he gazed helplessly round the prison chamber, his eyes fell upon the file of arquebuses leaning against the wall, with which the fatal volley was presently to be fired ; and at the sight of the dreaded weapons, a sudden thought flashed across

his quick brain. Creeping quietly along to the arquebuses, he dexterously managed to extract all the bullets, unnoticed by any of the merry feasters, and then, delighted with his clever trick, he awaited an opportunity to whisper to the intended victim what he had done.

When the Minister entered the room with the trembling, veiled Maritana, the revellers received them with gay acclamations, and quickly the bride and bridegroom were led to the prison chapel to be married. Neither could behold the other, because of the thick veil that enveloped Maritana; but Don Cæsar inwardly felt that his mysterious bride must be charming and fair to look upon, for several long locks of bright hair managed to escape the folds of her scarf, the hand she placed in his was small and soft, and her voice was full of music.

And Maritana also was thrilled at the touch and voice of Don Cæsar, and when after the ceremony she was hurried away by the exultant Don Jose, she longed for the time to come when she should see her husband face to face, for the cunning Minister had told her nothing of Don Cæsar's doom, but led her to suppose that she would see him very soon.

The hour had now arrived for Don Cæsar's execution, and he went forth to his mock death with a gay heart, for by this time Lazarillo had told him of his tampering with the arquebuses, and he knew that

all would be well with him. But he decided to go through the whole performance just as though the guns were properly charged, knowing that this was the only means by which he might yet escape; so, though inwardly full of mirth, he bade a sorrowful farewell to all around him, and when the volley was fired, fell to the ground at once, feigning death.

The executioners did not approach to examine the supposed corpse, but returned to the prison immediately; and when they had gone, the bold Don Cæsar calmly got up and walked away! Having thus escaped with his life, he determined to find his mysterious bride, and hurry from Madrid before recapture became possible; but as, knowing nothing of the pardon that had been accorded him, he dared not show himself in daylight, he kept in hiding until evening, when he issued forth cautiously in search of Lazarillo, whom he knew would now be in the service of the Minister.

Now Don Jose had laid all his plans with great skill, and knowing that a certain dependent of his, the Marquis de Montefiori, upon whom he had bestowed a remunerative appointment, was holding a grand reception that evening, he decided that Maritana should be introduced to this assembly as the Marquis's niece. Accordingly, when evening fell, he repaired with the gipsy-girl, splendidly attired, to the festive scene, and taking her into an ante-

room off the salon where the guests were being received, he sent for the Marquis, and informed him that Maritana was his (the Marquis's) long-lost niece.

"But I *have* no niece," exclaimed the puzzled Marquis.

"Pardon me, but *I* say that this lady, the Countess de Bazan, *is* your long-lost niece!" repeated Don Jose firmly. "And you must introduce her to your guests as such!"

On hearing this, the Marquis—a weak, foolish person, completely the tool of Don Jose, who made use of him for various unscrupulous purposes—pretended to suddenly remember his new-found relation, seeing that the Minister desired him to do so, and after welcoming her with exaggerated effusiveness, he led the bewildered Maritana to the salon beyond to be introduced to his wife and the assembly as his long-lost niece.

Don Jose was just about to follow, when a stranger, muffled in the robe of a monk, suddenly entered the anteroom, and to his surprise and dismay, he quickly recognised the handsome features of Don Cæsar de Bazan! Alarmed at this unexpected appearance of the man he had hoped and believed was dead, the Minister tremblingly asked how he came to be alive; and Don Cæsar gaily related the story of Lazarillo's trick, and of his own feigned death, adding: "And now I have come to demand my wife, the Countess de Bazan, who, I have been told, is here!"

For a moment Don Jose was nonplussed, knowing that if the bold Count took Maritana away now, his own base schemes with regard to the Queen would fall to the ground ; but quickly thinking out a plan of escape, he sought the Marchioness de Montefiori, and bringing her into the anteroom, introduced her with much ceremony to Don Cæsar as the Countess de Bazan.

Now, the Marchioness was old, ugly, silly, and frivolous, and when Don Cæsar saw that he had been wedded to such an unattractive person, he was filled with disappointment and disgust, and gladly agreed to sign a contract suggested by the quick-witted Minister to relinquish his wife and quit Madrid for ever in exchange for a yearly sum of money paid in compensation.

Before the paper was signed, however, Maritana's voice was heard singing in the salon beyond, and instantly recognising the voice as that of his mysterious veiled bride, Don Cæsar, knowing now that he had been cheated, flung the pen away, and angrily declared that he would have his true wife at all costs.

At this moment a party of guests, with Maritana in their midst, entered from the salon, and knowing that all would be lost should the husband and wife meet face to face, Don Jose gave orders for the storming Count to be instantly arrested by the guards on duty, who dragged him off in triumph. At the same time, Maritana was seized and

borne away also, that she might not behold the clamorous stranger, and seeing that she was now growing suspicious of her surroundings and treatment, Don Jose had her carried to a villa belonging to the King, close to the royal palace.

Here the young Gitana pined in lonely state for several days, guarded by the youth, Lazarillo; for although gorgeous attire and every luxury she could desire was heaped upon her, she felt that all was not well, and that her position was a false one.

"You have made me a countess, and given me wealth and a costly palace, but where is my husband?" she exclaimed anxiously to Don Jose, when after a lapse of several days he at last visited her; and the Minister replied with a triumphant wave of the hand towards the door: "He is here!"

At the same moment, the King of Spain entered the room; for Don Jose had kept his royal master fully acquainted with his movements regarding Maritana, and had now brought him to this gilded prison to amuse himself with the beautiful captive, whose fascinations had so completely enthralled him.

Having thus ensured, as he hoped, the accomplishment of the poor girl's dishonour, Don Jose went off to seek an interview with the neglected Queen, whom he now expected to convince of her husband's infidelity, but before departing, he gave strict orders to Lazarillo to permit no one

to enter the villa, and to fire upon any intruder.

When the King entered her room, Maritana recognised him at once as the stranger who had admired her in the streets, and the knowledge of his true identity suddenly flashing upon her at the same time, she drew back in surprise and alarm; but Charles advanced eagerly, and taking her hand, began to pour forth passionate protestations of devotion, offering her dazzling prospects of wealth and luxury if only she would accept his love. But Maritana was pure, and seeing now into what danger she had been snared, she utterly disregarded the King's protestations, and endeavoured to restrain his advances; and presently she was greatly relieved at a sudden interruption—a shot that sounded from the entrance to the villa.

The King quickly hurried her into the next chamber, and on returning to the salon, found himself face to face with the intruder, who had now made his entry through the window.

This was none other than Don Cæsar de Bazan, who, having gained his freedom (the Chief Minister having no power to detain him owing to the King's pardon), had come to demand his wife once more, having learnt that she was shut up within this very villa; but on finding a stranger in the salon, he was greatly surprised and alarmed, especially when Lazarillo (who

had followed him into the room, and recognised him with delight) in a whisper informed him that this stranger was the King of Spain. However, in spite of the difficulties he foresaw, the bold Count determined to rescue his unknown bride from the false position in which she had been placed, and to save his own name from dishonour, and addressing the King as a stranger, he serenely demanded his name.

Charles, having no idea of the true identity of his questioner, and thinking only of shielding himself from scandal, answered in a haughty tone: "I am Don Cæsar de Bazan! And pray, who are *you*?"

Instantly Don Cæsar, whose keen wit and happy resourcefulness never deserted him for a moment, replied promptly: "Oh Signor, if *you* are Don Cæsar de Bazan, why, then, *I* am Charles, King of Spain!"

The King was so much amused at the quick-witted boldness of the intruder (whom he soon gathered to be the real Don Cæsar), that for a short time he kept up the farce; but on seeing that he was known in spite of the name he had taken, he was just about to order Don Cæsar's arrest, when Lazarillo appeared again, saying that a messenger had arrived from the palace, where His Majesty's presence was immediately required.

Full of impatience at this second interruption to his love-making, the King hurried from the room, and no sooner had he gone

than Maritana entered, drawing back at the sight of another stranger. But Don Cæsar, knowing that he was at last face to face with his bride, and full of joy on beholding her wonderful beauty and charm, hurried forward with outstretched arms, and explaining rapidly that he was her own true husband, he declared that they should never more be parted.

And when Maritana heard the rich voice of Don Cæsar she instantly recognised it as that of the unseen bridegroom with whom she had knelt at the altar, and since their love was mutual, the husband and wife embraced with great joy.

Maritana now begged her husband to seek an interview with the Queen, whom she had observed walking in the palace gardens close by, and to induce her to intercede on their behalf, and when he had gone, she knelt at the window to pray for his success.

A short time after, the King returned to the salon, having despatched his business at the palace, and he was immediately followed by Don Cæsar, who looked greatly disturbed, and began to tell a strange story in excited tones.

He declared that he had entered the palace gardens to seek an interview with the Queen, when on approaching some thick bushes he had heard the sound of voices from the other side, and on drawing nearer, he had observed Don Jose de Santarem in close conversation with the Queen. "Your Majesty is being

deceived," the Chief Minister was saying, "for the King meets his new charmer in yonder villa to-night!"

He next had declared his own passion to the Queen, and had begged her to accept him as a lover in order to avenge herself on the faithless King; but the royal lady had indignantly refused to listen to him, scorning the love he offered. Furious at this proof of the baseness and treachery of the trusted Minister, Don Cæsar had then sprung forward and challenged him to fight, and in a few moments Don Jose had fallen, to rise no more.

Now when the young King thus learnt how nobly his honour had been upheld by the very man whose own good name he was seeking to destroy, he felt heartily ashamed of the unworthy part he had just played, and immediately relinquishing all pursuit of Maritana, he appointed Don Cæsar to the Governorship of the wealthy province of Valentia, as a mark of his gratitude and regard.

So the base designs of the unscrupulous Minister were at last brought to naught, and Don Cæsar de Bazan, restored to favour and a high position, retired with honour to Valentia to live in great happiness with his beautiful bride, Maritana.

MARTHA

THE Lady Henrietta was dull. She sat one summer morning in the gilded boudoir of her fine house at Richmond and heaved sigh upon sigh, for although Maid-of-Honour to Queen Anne, and the loveliest and most fascinating of all the Court beauties, she found no satisfaction in life. She was wearied to death of balls and routs, of the ceaseless flatteries of her many admirers, and of the tiresome monotony of Court life; and satiated with pleasure, she had retired to her own home for a few days' respite, to indulge in vapours to her heart's content.

Her merry little waiting-maid, Nancy, sat watching her mistress with anxious eyes, not knowing what to make of this new mood, and at last she said: "Surely, my lady, you are to be envied, with your high position, your dazzling beauty, and social success! Why, then, mope, when such joys are still to be had?"

"But I am weary of just those very joys, Nancy!" answered the pleasure-sated Court lady pettishly. "And unless I can find some new interest or excitement soon, I shall die of dullness!"

Just then a footman announced "Lord Tristan Mickleford!" and a stout, middle-aged gentleman of foppish manners, dressed in the extreme of the fashion, entered the room. He was a cousin and would-be admirer of the handsome Maid-of-Honour, and bowing elaborately before her, he began to make courtly speeches in exaggerated language, putting himself at her service for the day, and offering to escort her to any amusement she wished to indulge in. But the spoilt beauty turned away impatiently, declaring heartlessly that his society only bored her, and then, hearing sounds of merriment coming from without, she ran to the open window to see what was going on.

A group of gay country maidens and youths were passing by on their way to the statute fair at Richmond, where they would stand in ranks to be hired as servants for the ensuing year, according to a local custom; and the sight of these merry rustics suddenly suggested a daring frolic to the bored Henrietta, who sprang to her feet and exclaimed: "No more dullness to-day! We will dress ourselves in peasant garb, Nancy, and go to the fair as country wenches seeking a master! 'Twill amuse us vastly, and perhaps some one will hire us as servants. Oh, what a frolic! And *you* shall come too, my good Tristan, as our protecting brother."

The foppish Lord Tristan was shocked and dismayed at the scheme, protesting pompously that it was quite beneath his rank and dignity

to mingle in the motley crew of a fair ; but upon Henrietta declaring she would never speak to him again unless he obeyed her sovereign will in this matter, he gave a feeble consent, and grumblingly allowed himself to be garbed as a country bumpkin. By the time he was ready, his mischievous cousin joined him again with Nancy, both of them attired in homespun, with short bright skirts, neat bodices, and quaint head-dresses, certainly the prettiest and smartest peasant maidens ever seen in those parts ; and full of gaiety and eager excitement, the two girls dragged off their unwilling swain to the fair.

When they arrived upon the scene, the business of the day was at its height, and quickly noting the long row of country wenches standing at one side waiting to be hired as domestic servants, Henrietta determined to join their ranks. She adroitly invented an excuse for getting rid of the disgusted Lord Tristan for a short time, and then, bubbling over with mirth, the two saucy girls took up their stand amidst the serving-maids.

Amongst the busy crowd were two handsome well-to-do young farmers, by name Plunket and Lionel, who owned a joint-farm, and being in need of domestic help, they had come to the statute fair in order to hire a couple of wenches. These two, though loving each other as such, were not brothers, but they had lived together since

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childhood. Neither could recollect much of their first acquaintance, knowing little beyond the fact that Plunket's parents had rescued Lionel's father, a stranger and fugitive, from danger and destruction, and that the mysterious stranger, before dying, had bequeathed a ring to his orphan son, with the injunction that should he ever be in distress, to send it to the Queen, when his whole fate might be changed. Not being able to discover anything further about the birth or rank of the orphan left to their charge, the honest farmer and his wife brought him up with their own son, and when the farm at length came into the hands of the young Plunket, he made Lionel share his inheritance with him.

As the young farmers passed down the rows of country wenches, they presently caught sight of Lady Henrietta and Nancy, and being greatly struck with their good looks and smart appearance, they went up to the two girls at once, and began to bargain with them, offering considerably higher wages than they had ever paid before. Henrietta, enjoying the frolic more and more, and delighted to see that the handsome Lionel was struck with her beauty, threw him a roguish glance, and recklessly accepted his offer, giving her name as Martha; and the merry Nancy, willing enough to follow where her lively mistress led, gave her word also.

The young farmers, pleased at having

secured two such attractive serving-maids, at once paid over the earnest-money, by which they were bound to them for a whole year's service, and then, having no further business at the fair, they desired the girls to follow them to the farm, that they might begin their duties at once.

Then Henrietta and Nancy, more amused than ever, broke out into peals of laughter, declaring that they had only given their word in a joking manner, and never intended to hire themselves out at all; but their merriment soon ended when the two young farmers, indignant at such conduct, calmly informed them that, having taken earnest-money, they were bound by law to render service for a whole year, according to the custom of the district. The local sheriff who presided over the statute-hiring ratified what they said, and ordered the girls to follow their new masters at once; and then Henrietta, seeing that she had carried her escapade too far, was in great distress, not daring to disclose her true name and rank for fear of the scandal coming to the ears of the Queen.

Lord Tristan returned at this juncture, and full of wrath at what had happened, tried to withdraw the frightened girls from the fair; but the country folks, indignant at the statute rule being broken, set upon him at once, and quickly dragged him to the other end of the field.

Meanwhile the two young farmers bore their newly-hired servants off to the farm

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without more ado ; for Henrietta now thought it best for the present to submit quietly to the indignity she had brought on herself, hoping to escape later on.

On arriving at the farm, the triumphant masters soon discovered that they had made a very bad bargain as to the working capabilities of their new maids ; for neither of the girls could do a stroke of domestic work, and were extremely indignant on being bidden to perform the smallest service. Nancy, indeed, went further still, being bent on mischief, for she soon developed a destructive tendency ; and Plunket, who had undertaken to instruct her in her duties, had his hands full in preventing her from breaking all his domestic goods and chattels.

Whilst these two were squabbling in the kitchen, Henrietta condescended to receive a lesson in spinning from the handsome Lionel, whose gentle manners and naturally aristocratic bearing had impressed her pleasantly from the first ; and Lionel, whose admiration and regard for the supposed "Martha" was developing into love at a most alarming rate, found the task a very pleasant one. The touch of the soft white hand thrilled him as he guided it through the intricacies of the spinning-wheel, and the beautiful girl made such a charming picture as she sat there, playing at work, that he was filled with delight.

Elated at having made such an easy conquest of the young farmer, whose ardent

glances soon betrayed the state of his susceptible heart, Henrietta quickly recovered her good spirits, and later on she was even persuaded to sing by the indulgent master, who was already recklessly encouraging his new handmaid in idleness.

So the bewitching Martha sang "The Last Rose of Summer," in a voice so soft and sweet that Lionel was enthralled; and when the song came to an end, he flung himself impetuously at her feet, intoxicated with delight, declaring passionately that he loved her, and that, so far from being his servant, he now desired to make her his wife. Lady Henrietta, astonished and dismayed at the quick development of the passion she had so carelessly excited, took refuge in laughter, and poor Lionel, seeing his raptures thus treated with lightness, was plunged into wretchedness.

Plunket now returned with the saucy Nancy, whose outrageous behaviour had by this time nearly driven him frantic, though her tantalizing charms had already won his heart, and ordering the two unsatisfactory servants to bed, he declared to Lionel he feared they had made a bad bargain.

When Lady Henrietta and Nancy found themselves alone in their chamber they had no intention of going to rest, and as soon as they made sure that the two young farmers had also retired for the night, they began to think of some way of escape. Just as they were laying their plans, they heard a voice

calling to them from outside, and quickly throwing up the window, they beheld with relief the portly form of Lord Tristan Mickleford standing below. He hastily explained in a nervous whisper that he had a carriage waiting for them beyond the farm-yard, and eagerly clambering down from the low window-sill, Henrietta soon made her way to the welcome vehicle. Nancy quickly followed, and the movements of the fugitives were so silent that it was not until the carriage was driving off that the defrauded masters were aroused.

Then, when they found that their pretty maids had flown, the two young farmers were full of indignation, and next day they searched the whole country-side for news of the runaways. Their efforts were, however, in vain, for by this time, Henrietta had returned gladly to her Court life. But a strange sadness now frequently came over her spirits, for her heart had been more deeply touched by the honest affection of the manly Lionel than she was willing to admit, and she longed to see him again, even though she knew the difference in their rank forbade her to give him hope.

Lionel was now filled with despair, the loss of his beautiful Martha only increasing his passion, and he still continued to make enquiries for her, accompanied in his search by the faithful Plunket, who also desired to find Mistress Nancy, whose mischievous glances had bewitched him.

Then, at last, the two lovers met their charmers once again.

One day a grand royal hunt took place in Richmond forest, and Lady Henrietta, as one of the Maids-of-Honour, joined the ranks of the huntresses, together with her maid, Nancy. Soon after the hunt had commenced, however, Henrietta withdrew a little apart from the gay company, and wandering down a lonely glade, soon gave herself up to the melancholy thoughts that had lately taken possession of her.

But Nancy, merry and lively as ever, went on with the rest of the party, and presently, to her surprise and utter consternation, she came suddenly face to face with the young farmer, Plunket, who happened to be strolling through Richmond forest that day, on his way from the village.

No sooner did Plunket set eyes on Nancy than he recognised her instantly as his runaway maid, and accosting her without ceremony, he ordered her to return to his service at once. At first Nancy tried to put him off by laughing and pretending not to know him, but when Plunket seized her arm gently, but firmly, insisting that she should follow him, the girl was alarmed for her mistress's sake, and turning to the surprised ladies and gentlemen, she called on them to come to her rescue.

Immediately the indignant party closed about Plunket, buffeting and belabouring him with their hunting-crops, and the

unfortunate farmer was obliged to beat a retreat as best he could.

Meanwhile Lionel, who was also walking in the forest not far away, had wandered unconsciously into the very same glade that Henrietta had selected for her lonely ramble, and presently approaching a lady of quality garbed in the rich habit of a fashionable huntress, he recognised, to his utter astonishment, the beautiful features of his beloved Martha. In great delight, he hurried forward with outstretched arms to greet her, and at first, Henrietta, overjoyed in spite of herself, uttered an exclamation of pleasure. Then, recollecting that she would be disgraced should the knowledge of her escapade become known at Court, and seeing that her companions in the chase were already approaching her, she suddenly turned cold, and haughtily denied the young farmer's acquaintance.

But Lionel, his passion enhanced at again beholding the object of his affection, determined to assert his rights as a master, and commanded her eagerly to return to his employ; and then Henrietta, afraid of what might follow, called out to her companions for help, declaring that Lionel was a madman.

Instantly, the rest of the hunting party crowded around, and when Lionel heard Henrietta addressed on all sides as "My Lady," he saw in a flash that a trick had been played upon him at the statute fair, and

that this fine Court beauty had only been amusing herself at his expense. Knowing now that his love could never hope to be requited, he was filled with disappointment and despair, and he began to pour forth such scornful, passionate reproaches, that the huntsmen, thinking him mad indeed, closed around and attempted to drive him away.

At this moment Plunket appeared on the scene once more, and quickly joining in the fray, he at length managed to drag his friend away, and returned with him to the farm.

Here poor Lionel, overcome by grief and refusing to be comforted, feeling that his beloved one was now lost to him for ever, quickly fell into a delirious state bordering on frenzy, and Plunket, fearing for his friend's life, at length sent a message to Lady Henrietta (whose true rank and name he had quickly discovered), entreating her to visit the farm at least once again. With this message he also sent the ring that had been bequeathed to Lionel by his mysterious father, requesting the Maid-of-Honour to place it in the hands of the Queen; for he felt that this was a fitting time for the token to be presented, since his poor friend could not well be in greater distress, nor in more urgent need of help.

When Lady Henrietta received the message, she was conscience-stricken and filled with grief, for she had instantly regretted her

cruel treatment of Lionel in the forest, and could no longer hide from herself the fact that she loved him with her whole heart. She determined to go to the farm at once, and humbly accept the love of this honest, faithful wooer, but before starting she sought an interview with her royal mistress, into whose hands she delivered the ring that Plunket had sent.

A wonderful surprise was now in store for all, for the carefully-hoarded ring brought back a long-forgotten incident to the Queen, and proved to her that the young farmer, Lionel, was in reality the only son of the unfortunate Earl of Derby, who, wrongfully accused of treason, had been forced to flight, and died in exile.

The royal lady determined to heal the wrongs inflicted on the father by restoring the son to his rightful rank and possessions; and the joyful tidings of this happy change in his fortunes was carried to Lionel by the fair Henrietta herself.

The young Earl was duly reinstated to the proper rank, wealth, and Court favour to which he was entitled, but, to the utter grief of Henrietta, the sufferings to which her thoughtless conduct had subjected him had unhinged her lover's mind, and rendered his memory of all the incidents connected with her a blank.

Henrietta was in despair, for by this time Plunket and the merry Nancy had already made up their minds to marry, and she

longed to follow their example. At length a gleam of hope came to her, for having read that when a sudden shock unhinges a person's reason the mind can sometimes be restored to its proper balance by repeating the incidents that first caused the calamity, she determined to try the experiment with Lionel.

Easily prevailing upon her friends to help her in the scheme, she caused an impromptu fair to be held in her own gardens, setting up stalls and booths in exact imitation of the Richmond statutes, with a rank of serving-maids waiting to be hired; and when all was ready, she dressed herself in peasant garb once more, and took up her stand with Nancy amongst the country girls.

Then Plunket led Lionel through the show and down the ranks of pretty maids as he had done on the actual day of the fair, and, as all had hoped, the light of memory gradually brought back the wandering reason of the young Earl, and restored his mind to its normal state.

The moment he beheld Henrietta in her dainty peasant dress, he recognised the beautiful Martha whose charms had won his heart, and a clear recollection of all the events succeeding the statute fair coming suddenly upon him, he hurried forward and clasped her in his arms with great joy, knowing now that there was no further obstacle to their union.

So the mock fair had served its purpose,

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and a short time afterwards the young Earl of Derby, restored to reason and happiness, was married to Lady Henrietta, whom he had learned to love so dearly as Martha the serving-maid.

CARMEN

ONE noontide, during the early years of the nineteenth century, a group of light-hearted soldiers were standing together outside the guard-house in the great public square of Seville waiting for the change of guard, and as they stood there, idly watching the ever-moving crowd, they whiled away the time by making merry remarks on the passers-by.

It was a bright and lively scene, for at this time of the day the square was filled with youths and maidens just freed from morning work, who, seeking relaxation, were glad enough to sing and dance, and indulge in gay badinage one with another.

One of the soldiers without the guard-house, a brigadier named Morales, found endless amusement in watching the living panorama before him, and presently he noticed a pretty young girl, who, by her timid glances and innocent, hesitating manner, he guessed at once to be a stranger from the country.

The newcomer was indeed a humble peasant maid, by name Micaela, who had journeyed from her village home some miles distant in search of her foster-brother, Don

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Jose, a young brigadier in the regiment now quartered at Seville, to whom she bore a message from his mother; but having made her way into the busy square, she was so much bewildered by the noisy crowd that she hardly dared to venture further.

Seeing her hesitancy, the dashing Morales swaggered forward, and asked her in easy tones whom she sought; and on learning from the trembling maiden that she wished to speak with Don Jose, he told her that the young brigadier would presently appear with the change of guard, and suggested that in the meantime she should accept the company of himself and his friends. But the bold, admiring glances of the gay soldiers alarmed the shy Micaela, and with a startled cry she broke from the persuading arms of Morales, and ran off to await her foster-brother's appearance in a quieter spot.

A few minutes later the guard was changed, and with the relieving party came the brigadier, Don Jose, a handsome youth who had some months ago left his quiet country home and widowed mother for the excitement and stir of a soldier's life. On being told by Morales that a pretty peasant maiden had been asking for him, Don Jose guessed at once that it was Micaela, and rejoiced; for having grown up together, he regarded her with much affection, and even intended to marry her, knowing this to be his mother's cherished desire.

Just as the guard was changed, the bell

of a large cigarette factory at one end of the square clanged forth its noonday chimes, and a few minutes later a noisy troop of girls employed as cigarette-makers came pouring forth from the building, laughing and chattering gaily as they mingled with the idlers in the square.

Amongst this merry throng of newcomers was a beautiful young girl of gipsy birth, named Carmen, whose dark, flashing eyes and scornful lips spoke of passionate emotions and reckless daring, and whose saucy, sparkling glances proclaimed the born coquette; and no sooner did she appear than a court of admiring youths instantly crowded around her, clamouring for her smiles and favours.

But the capricious beauty would have none of them this day, for her roving eye had fallen upon the handsome form of the young brigadier, Don Jose, and being greatly struck with his manly appearance, she presently went forward and boldly made acquaintance with him, declaring plainly that she liked his looks, and inviting him to meet her when next he came off duty.

Now Don Jose had been warned of the dangerous attractions of the lovely cigarette-girl, and so received her advances somewhat coldly; but when the saucy Carmen flung him the rose she had been wearing as she laughingly tripped away, he picked it up eagerly, enthralled by her dazzling glances in spite of himself.

At this moment Micaela appeared in the square once more, and Don Jose, hurrying forward, greeted her with much affection and eagerness, longing for news of his country home. The gentle peasant maiden placed in his hands a letter from his mother, and also a gift of money; and, faithful to her charge, she delivered the lonely widow's loving message, even bestowing upon him the kiss she had sent at parting.

Having thus fulfilled her quest, Micaela, still afraid of the staring crowd, departed, saying she would return again shortly, and Don Jose, his heart filled with tender memories of home, began to read his mother's letter. The widow besought her son not to forget his old home, but to return shortly and wed the gentle Micaela, who loved him so well and faithfully; and the young brigadier was so engrossed by the sweet visions of peaceful joy thus suggested to him, that he stood for a time lost in pleasant thought, and utterly regardless of the merry throng around him.

Presently, however, he was aroused from his reverie by loud cries and angry expostulation from amongst the cigarette-girls, and seeing that a squabble was taking place, he hurried forward with the Captain of the Guard to restore order. The reckless Carmen, ever ripe for mischief, had picked a quarrel with one of the other cigarette-makers, and her hot blood being roused by the taunts of her companion, she had quickly drawn a stiletto, and aimed a blow at her.

Seeing that the girl was wounded, the Captain of the Guard instantly ordered the fiery Carmen to be arrested, though one of her admirers himself, and then, leaving Don Jose in charge of the captive, he hurried into the guard-house to obtain the order for her imprisonment.

Now Carmen had no intention of going to prison, and knowing well enough that she had already attracted the handsome young brigadier, for whom a sudden passion had also grown up within her own fickle heart, she quickly determined to fascinate him still further, so that he should connive at her escape. So when Don Jose tried to secure her hands with a cord, she laughingly besought him to bind her with his own arms instead, declaring saucily that she knew he loved her because he still wore the rose she had thrown to him, and since he loved her he was now in her power, and must do exactly as she commanded.

Don Jose, though already enthralled and a victim to her passionate glances, made a feeble denial of his love, but Carmen laughed derisively, declaring again that he was hers, and inviting him to meet her later at a certain inn on the borders of Seville, where they would dance and sing together as happy lovers.

The young brigadier was now completely bewitched by the enticing words of the beautiful coquette, who thus tempted him to forget his duty; and full of the intoxication

of sudden love, he whispered passionately that he would help her to escape, and meet her at the border inn, if she would promise to love him in return.

Full of exultation at thus gaining her freedom and a new lover into the bargain, Carmen gave the promise, and then the two quickly arranged a plan of escape.

When the Captain of the Guard returned with the prison order, the young brigadier led the captive off at once; but ere they had gone far, Carmen gave Don Jose a sudden push, so that he fell to the ground, and in the confusion that followed, she managed to make her escape through the crowd.

It was easily seen by the captain and soldiers standing about that Don Jose had allowed himself to be thrown to the ground, and he was quickly captured and borne off to gaol. Here he was compelled to serve a term of imprisonment, but all through his lonely hours he thought constantly of the fascinating young beauty whom he now loved so passionately, and determined to keep his appointment with her directly he gained his freedom.

Meanwhile Carmen had made her way to the border inn, the landlord of which was one of a successful band of smugglers, and here, falling into gipsy ways once more, she gave her assistance to the illicit traffic, the dangers and risks of which strongly appealed to her daring spirit and love of adventure.

This border inn was the favourite resort of certain officers and soldiers in the town, who, knowing nothing of the smuggling tendencies of the landlord, went to dance and amuse themselves with the pretty gipsy girls who frequented the place. Amongst these officers was Zuniga, the Captain of the Guard, who was so fascinated by the tantalizing charms of Carmen that he made no attempt at her recapture, preferring to make love to her instead ; but the careless coquette would have nothing to say to him, until he came one evening with the news that Don Jose had been set at liberty and allowed to return to his regimental duties. Then she condescended to smile on the captain, for she was delighted to hear of her self-sacrificing lover's freedom, knowing well that he would certainly seek her out at once, and the foolish Zuniga went away happy, imagining that he had made a conquest.

That same evening a grand torch-light procession in honour of the most popular Toreador in Seville, a gay, handsome youth named Escamillo, took place, and on passing the border inn, the Toreador and his friends stepped within. Being greatly struck with the enticing beauty of Carmen, the gay Escamillo made advances to her, seeking her good favour ; but the pretty gipsy, though pleased with his handsome looks, would neither accept nor refuse his admiration, all her thoughts for the present being

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centred on Don Jose, who she knew would visit her that night.

When the Toreador, soldiers, and other customers had departed, the landlord brought in his smuggler friends to talk over a new enterprise, with which they desired the gipsy girls to help. To their astonishment, Carmen flatly refused to join them that night, declaring that she meant to wait within the inn for her lover; and in spite of her companions' expostulations and entreaties, she still clung to this resolution. Then the smugglers, knowing that threats were in vain with the fearless gipsy, suggested that she should persuade her lover also to join their expedition; and Carmen gladly agreed to this, bidding them wait for her in an adjoining room.

No sooner had the smugglers retired than she heard Don Jose's voice outside, and opening the door quietly, she was next moment clasped in her lover's arms. Then, whilst the young brigadier refreshed himself with the food and wine she placed before him, Carmen sang and danced in her most enchanting manner, and Don Jose, more in love than ever, applauded her with great delight.

But suddenly he heard the bugle call outside, sounding the recall, and knowing that this was the signal for all soldiers to return to the barracks, he rose to bid his sweetheart farewell for the night. Then Carmen was offended, saying he could not care for her

or he would not be so anxious to leave her side, and in spite of Don Jose's explanation that his soldier's duty alone compelled him to go, she scornfully refused to listen to him, declaring that if he truly loved her he would be willing to remain, and to follow her wherever she might lead.

Employing her most practised arts of coquetry, she tempted him to give up all and fly with her and her smuggler friends to the mountains, to live the rover's life of excitement and danger, declaring that, otherwise, she would never see him again; and the poor young brigadier was nearly distracted, for, though enthralled by love, yet he could not bear to think of deserting his regiment.

Just then there came a knock at the door, and Zuniga, Captain of the Guard, entered, having come for another farewell greeting from Carmen before returning to the town; but on encountering Don Jose, he haughtily ordered the youth to instantly rejoin the departing soldiers, who were again sounding the bugle call. But Don Jose, angry at the interruption, passionately refused to go, and next moment their swords were clashing together.

Carmen, triumphant at the victory she had gained, knowing that Don Jose at last was hers, called aloud for help, and when the smugglers rushed into the room, she made them seize and bind the unfortunate captain so that he should not interfere with their

plans. Don Jose, now completely under the spell of Carmen's fascination, was next invited by the smugglers to join in their enterprise, and upon his agreeing to do so, the whole party set off to their rocky retreat in the mountains.

Here, amidst a wild, picturesque country, the smugglers plied their illicit trade with success for some time, and Don Jose, though often filled with remorse for his lost position, and tortured by the thoughts of his lonely mother, who still believed in his honesty, found relief in the frequent danger he was exposed to, and delight in the constant society of Carmen. In spite of the fact that she had caused him to desert his regiment and become a smuggler, ruining his character for ever, he still passionately loved the beautiful gipsy girl; but Carmen's fickle affection grew cooler each day, and having lost the excitement of pursuit by conquest, she already wished for a new lover, and began to think tenderly of the handsome Toreador who had besought her favour at the inn. But as Carmen's love grew colder, the more passionately did Don Jose long to keep it, and in spite of her taunts and slights, he declared that she should not cast him off, since he would never leave her side. However, he was at last compelled to do so, and the faithless gipsy rejoiced at the chance circumstance that took away from her the lover she had grown weary of.

One day Don Jose was set to guard the entrance to the smugglers' haunt, and seeing

a stranger climbing up the mountain-side, he raised his gun and fired. The stranger, however, leaped aside and avoided the shot, and next moment he sprang to the ledge beside his assailant, and announced himself as Escamillo, the Toreador.

This well-known name dispersed Don Jose's hostility at once, and greeting the newcomer with respect, he desired to know his business in the gipsy camp. Escamillo replied that he had come to see the beautiful young gipsy girl, Carmen, with whom he had fallen desperately in love, and whose favour he now hoped to gain, since he expected she had by this time discarded her last lover, a deserter from the army.

On hearing this Don Jose was filled with anger and jealousy, and drawing his dagger, he challenged the Toreador to fight; and Escamillo, seeing that he had unwittingly fallen upon a rival, drew his own dagger in defence. But before either could aim a stroke, Carmen, who had heard the shot fired, appeared on the scene with the smugglers, who quickly separated the pair.

Escamillo rushed instantly to the side of Carmen, greeting her with rapture, and rejoicing to find that his advances were now received with answering pleasure; and then, as the smugglers refused to allow him to remain in their midst, he bade them farewell, but invited them all ere he departed to attend the great bull-fight to be held that week in Seville, at which he expected to achieve another triumph.

When he had gone, Don Jose, who had seen the passionate glances Carmen had bestowed upon her new admirer, began to upbraid her, and to warn her not to torture him too much, lest he did her harm. But the reckless Carmen cared naught for his threats, even though that very day, when reading her fortune by cards, they had foretold her an early death; for the beautiful gipsy was a true fatalist, and, regardless of the future, was willing to accept evil, if evil was in store for her.

Before Don Jose could expostulate further with Carmen, some of the smugglers came up to him with a struggling girl whom they had just found making her way into their camp, and to his utter astonishment and dismay the young brigadier beheld his foster-sister, Micaela.

The poor peasant girl had journeyed to Seville a second time, bearing another sad message to the man she loved, and on being told of Don Jose's desertion and of the evil ways into which he had fallen, she had still determined to find him, that she might deliver her message, and, if possible, draw him away from the woman who had enticed him to such wrong-doing.

Having learnt that he was in the gipsy smugglers' camp, she had fearlessly made her way there; and now, on coming face to face with the object of her search, she implored him to return with her to his old home, where his lonely mother was still weeping and waiting for him. Carmen

hoping thus to be rid of her inconvenient lover, also added to this entreaty, saying that he would do well to go away, since a smuggler's life would never suit him; but Don Jose, stung by her scornful taunt, declared that he would never leave her side, since she only desired his absence that she might pursue her new Toreador lover.

Then Micaela, with tears in her eyes, told the wretched youth that his mother was dying, and that unless he returned with her at once he would be too late to receive her forgiveness and last blessing; and on hearing this Don Jose was distracted with grief, and his filial love overcoming all other feelings for the moment, he bade a hasty farewell to Carmen, declaring that he would be with her again in a few days.

He then went off with Micaela, and the fickle Carmen, now thinking only of Escamillo, whom she already loved, returned next day to Seville with her gipsy friends, who had by this time finished their enterprise and were eager to attend the bull-fight to which they had been invited. The gay Toreador soon found himself an accepted lover, and Carmen, now loving at last with the whole of her passionate nature, was radiantly happy with Escamillo.

On the day of the bull-fight she accompanied him to the arena, and when he had departed for the fight, she was just about to enter the enclosure in order to watch his triumph, when she saw Don Jose approaching. Her gipsy companions begged her to

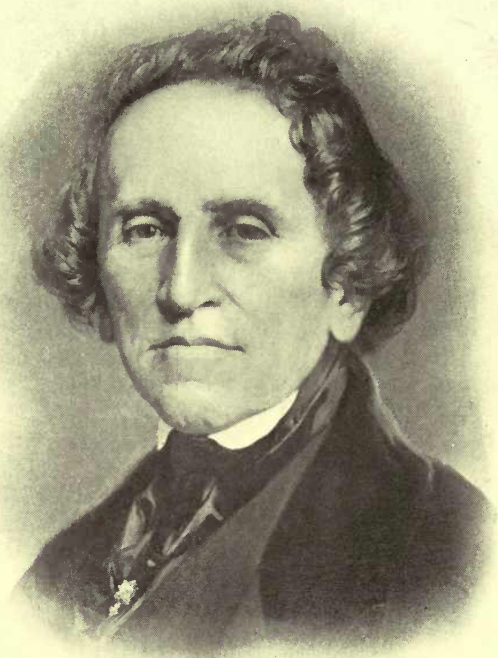
turn aside, fearing from his dark, gloomy looks that he meant to do her harm; but Carmen was brave, and, reckless of danger, she went forward to meet her discarded lover with a cool and dauntless air.

Don Jose, chastened by grief and suffering, gently took the beautiful girl's hand in his and besought her to return with him to his country home, that they might there live a new and better life together; adding that he loved her so dearly that he longed to save her from her evil ways.

But Carmen angrily freed herself from his grasp, saying that all was now at an end between them, since she could never love him again; and flinging at his feet the ring he had given her, she declared passionately that she loved Escamillo the Toreador with her whole heart, and would love him only until her last breath. Stung to madness by her repudiation of him, Don Jose's pent-up rage and jealousy now broke forth in all its fury, and in a sudden frenzy of passion he drew his stiletto and stabbed her to the heart.

As the beautiful Carmen sank lifeless to the ground, loud shouts of applause arose from the arena announcing the popular Toreador's victory, and next moment, accompanied by a cheering crowd of admirers, Escamillo came forth from the enclosure glowing with triumph, and eager for the praises and greetings of the woman he loved.

But those praises and greetings were never spoken, for the woman he loved lay dead at his feet.



MEYERBEER

ROBERT THE DEVIL

A BRILLIANT scene was taking place in the port of Palermo one day in the beginning of the eleventh century, for a large number of noble cavaliers and knights had lately arrived from various cities in Europe to take part in a grand Tournament to be held there, and all were talking about the great event as they greeted one another and quaffed wine together.

The Tournament was to be held under the auspices of the Duke of Messina, the hand of whose daughter, the beautiful Princess Isabella of Sicily, was offered as the prize of victory ; and it was for this reason that so many of the proudest knights in Christendom had determined to enter the lists, for the fair Princess was indeed a dazzling reward.

Amongst the latest arrivals was a handsome young knight, whose rich equipment and splendid train of attendants quickly attracted the attention of the assembled cavaliers, and excited their curiosity as to who he might be ; for he was unknown to them, though not a stranger in Palermo. This newcomer was in reality Robert,

Duke of Normandy, who had gained for himself the ill-famed title of "Robert the Devil"—a name which, though first bestowed on him from the supposition that his father had been a fiend, he had afterwards fully earned by his own recklessly wicked conduct, which had at length resulted in his expulsion from Normandy.

During his subsequent wanderings and adventures in Europe, Robert had made the acquaintance of the lovely Princess of Sicily, for whom he had instantly conceived a true and deep passion; and Isabella, though warned by his evil reputation, had quickly returned his love, being irresistibly attracted by his handsome looks, and the glimpses of a nobler nature which he exhibited when in her presence.

His wild and passionate disposition, however, quickly led him into a violent outburst of jealous rage against his beloved one's father, who did not encourage his suit, and not content with insulting the proud ruler, he also challenged all his knights to combat. This brought disaster upon him, for the Duke of Messina's angry knights were too powerful for him to overcome, and soon compelled him to take to flight.

Robert was in despair at the result of his rash conduct, for Isabella was deeply offended, and though still secretly loving him, she seemed inclined to favour the addresses of the Duke of Granada, whose suit was constantly urged by her father.

But when the Tournament and its prize for victory were shortly afterwards announced, Robert determined to seek pardon of the Princess, and enter the lists as a candidate; and to this end he had now arrived in Palermo with a gorgeous retinue, displaying every mark of extravagant splendour.

Now, in all his evil pleasures and wild excesses, Robert had always been aided and encouraged by a sinister-looking knight, named Bertram, who was his constant companion, and who, though he knew it not, was in reality his fiend-father; and so, upon arriving in Palermo, this favoured friend was in close attendance upon the young Duke as usual.

Robert greeted the assembled nobles in a courtly manner, and then, observing that some Norman troubadours were also in the company, he tossed a piece of gold to one of these, and bade him sing a lay. The minstrel, whose name was Raimbaud, at once stepped forward, and little guessing that it was his royal master who stood before him, he announced to the expectant lords that he would sing to them the true story of Normandy's ill-fated young Duke, known as "Robert the Devil."

He then tuned his harp, and began his lay, relating how the proud Princess Bertha of Normandy, after scornfully refusing many noble suitors, at length accepted the love of a stranger prince, who was, in truth, a fiend in disguise. He went on to describe how

the son of this strange marriage was young Robert, called the Devil, because, inheriting a love of evil from his demon-father, he had constantly indulged in wicked excesses of every kind : and led away by the excitement of his theme, the minstrel portrayed the vices of Normandy's banished Duke in the glowing colours of popular dread.

Strange to say, Robert himself had never before heard the story of his supposed fiend-father, and as he listened to the minstrel's lay he became so full of rage that when it came to an end he could no longer restrain his feelings. Haughtily announcing that he himself was Robert of Normandy, he commanded his attendants to seize and hang the troubadour without delay ; and instantly the wretched Raimbaud, realizing what a terrible mistake he had made, fell on his knees, entreating for mercy. He declared that he had not recognised his royal master, for whom he had brought an important message ; and he added that he and his betrothed, a young village maiden, had come to Palermo together for this very purpose.

On hearing this, Robert now declared that he would take the village maiden in compensation for the minstrel's life, and ordering Raimbaud's release, he sent for the girl, promising her as a prize to his cavaliers. The unhappy Raimbaud utter a cry of woe, but the gay cavaliers quickly surrounded the pretty maiden he had indicated, squabbling

fiercely as to which should obtain possession of her.

The poor girl cried aloud for mercy ; but as she was helplessly dragged forward, Robert himself ran to her aid, for he had instantly recognised her as his foster-sister, Alice, with whom he had played as a child, in Normandy. He quickly released her from the rough hands of her lawless captors, and as the cavaliers fell back, grumbling at the loss of their prey, he proclaimed that the maiden was under his protection, for the sight of her sweet, innocent face had roused within him once more the better feelings of his childish days.

He then asked her how she came to be in Palermo, and Alice replied that she and her betrothed, Raimbaud, had deferred the day of their union, in order to bring a message to their royal master from his sainted mother. In answer to Robert's eager questions, she told him that the Princess Bertha was now dead, and that her last message to her erring son had been that as she had prayed for him on earth, so would she also never cease to pray for him in Heaven.

Full of grief at hearing of the death of his mother, Robert told Alice that naught was left to him but despair, since he also had another terrible trouble to bear ; but on relating to her the story of his now hopeless love for Isabella, the village maiden comforted him greatly by declaring that she

would seek out the Princess, and implore her to pardon him. But suddenly catching sight of the sinister knight, Bertram, she trembled violently, saying that his dark face reminded her of a picture she had once seen of the Evil One, and seeing that he was about to approach, she crept away to rejoin her released lover.

Bertram now persuaded Robert to indulge in a game of dice with their new friends, and encouraged by his evil companion to double and treble his stakes at each failure, the reckless young Duke quickly lost the whole of his fortune, even to his horses and armour.

Meanwhile, the gentle Alice had not forgotten her promise to her royal foster-brother, and on the day of the Tournament she sought an interview with the Princess of Sicily as she sat beneath her gorgeous canopy, and gave her a message from Robert, who implored pardon and humbly asked permission to contest for her hand in the lists that day. Isabella, who had never ceased to love Robert in spite of her displeasure at his wild conduct, was overjoyed to receive this contrite message, and readily granting the pardon he asked, she sent back a gracious invitation to him to accept the challenge of her principal suitor, the Duke of Granada, who proudly called on all rivals to meet him in open combat.

But when at last the heralds blared forth the haughty Duke's challenge to Robert of Normandy, no response was made, and

though the challenge was repeated again and again, still Robert did not stand forth. Nor did he appear throughout the whole of the Tournament; and when, at the end of the contests, the Duke of Granada was declared victor and winner of the fair Princess's hand, Isabella returned to her apartments overcome with grief and despair, feeling that Robert had betrayed her trust and scorned her love.

Now, Robert's absence from the Tournament had been cunningly contrived by the fiend-knight, Bertram, who had no desire for his victim to retrieve his character by gaining honour and glory in combat; so, having lured him away from the scene by a phantom in the form of his hated rival, the Duke of Granada, he led him to a desert place outside the city.

Having induced him to enter a gloomy cave, where he intended to reveal a secret to him, and also enquire of the spirits of darkness concerning him, Bertram returned for a moment to the open ground; and here, to his annoyance, he found Raimbaud the Minstrel, who announced that he awaited Alice, his betrothed, whom he had asked to meet him there, as they intended to be wedded that day.

Being anxious for him to depart, the knight gave Raimbaud a handsome gift of gold, bidding him think no more of Alice, but return to his wanderings once again, since, being now rich, he would quickly find many other pretty girls willing to love him; and

the minstrel, held for the time being under the spell of Bertram's evil influence, at once hurried back to the city, where, however, better feelings prevailing again, he waited at the entrance for his betrothed.

Bertram now returned to the cave and invoked the evil spirits he knew so well. Whilst this invocation was going on, Alice appeared at the trysting-place, and, full of disappointment that her lover had failed to keep his engagement, she crept into the mouth of the cave to await him.

Here she was alarmed to see vivid flashes of lightning, and to hear, amidst dreadful rumblings, the unearthly voices of demons calling a greeting to Robert; and fearing that her beloved foster-brother was in woeful danger, she was just about to spring forward to the spot where a flash of lightning presently revealed him to her sight, when Bertram suddenly blocked her path. He first attempted to address her in tones of gallantry, but the girl shrank back with such a look of unutterable horror in her eyes that the fiend knew at once she had guessed the secret of his true identity. Seizing her by the arm, he passionately declared that if she ever betrayed his secret, or revealed aught of what she had seen and heard in the cave, she should die, and also bring death upon her lover, and all whom she held dear; and Alice, though she longed to warn Robert, was so terrified by the awful aspect

of Bertram that she dared not do so, but rushed wildly from the cave.

Bertram then returned to Robert, and divulged to him an evil scheme, by means of which he hoped to utterly destroy his soul. He invited him to visit the spot where Princess Bertha had been buried, and to pluck therefrom a certain magic bough that would give him resistless power, and enable him to satisfy every earthly desire, no matter how evil or impossible it might be; and Robert, deprived of the good influence of Alice, readily yielded to his solicitations, and set off at once with his fiend-counsellor for the Convent of Rosalie, where his mother's remains had been laid.

This Convent had been founded by Princess Bertha for pure Christian worship; but the spot had soon been deprived of its sanctity by the nuns themselves, who, forgetting their vows, had adored heathen gods, and offered impious sacrifices. Where virtue had once been cherished, vice only now dwelt, and when Bertram and Robert appeared amidst the gravestones, the evil spirits of the fallen nuns arose from all sides, and taking on the form of beautiful nymphs, assisted in the temptation of the victim.

For a short time Robert tried to resist the evil influences around him, but soon the insidious goading of Bertram prevailed, and plucking the magic bough, he rushed

madly from the spot. His tempter quickly followed, bidding him to possess himself of the Princess of Sicily, whose innocence he might now destroy unhindered, in revenge for the scorn with which her proud father had treated him; and roused to madness by the subtle suggestion, Robert instantly returned to Palermo to carry it out.

It was the day of Princess Isabella's nuptials with the Duke of Granada, whom she still disliked, though forced by her father to wed with him, and her attendants, attired in wedding garments, were just waiting in the anteroom to conduct the unhappy bride to the adjoining church as Robert entered.

By the power of his magic bough, the frenzied young Duke instantly caused all the attendants to fall into a charmed sleep, and then, hurrying into the apartment beyond, he attempted to carry off the Princess by force. Isabella, quickly reading her ravisher's purpose in the evil passion that blazed in his eyes, fell on her knees and implored him by the pure love he had once felt for her to show mercy upon her helplessness; and Robert, after a wild struggle with the evil desires within him, was at length overcome by her entreaties, and, full of remorse, destroyed his talisman.

Instantly his magic powers vanished, so that the attendants, awakening from their charmed sleep in drowsy astonishment

suddenly beheld the intruder, and quickly divining his fell purpose, they rushed forward to seize him. Robert, however, taking to flight, escaped their hands, and the attendants, returning to the now grief-stricken bride, conducted her to the church in state, to await her bridegroom.

Robert found refuge in the cloisters of the church, and here he was soon joined by Bertram, who, at last revealing himself as his fiend-father, now produced a parchment, begging him to sign it, by which act he would be bound to him for ever.

Though amazed to learn of the true identity of Bertram, Robert did not draw back in horror, since, in his hopeless misery, he still regarded the fiend as his best friend; and he was just about to sign the contract when the peasant girl, Alice, suddenly appeared in the cloisters, and implored him to refrain from such a dreadful deed, since she had brought a joyful message for him.

She announced that Heaven watched over him and favoured his union with the woman he loved, for the proud Duke of Granada and his attendants had not been able to cross the threshold of the church; and she added that the beautiful Isabella, whose love was still his, now awaited him at the altar, hoping, by their union, to lead him to a better life.

On hearing this, Robert's despair became greater still, being torn between the prospects of pure joys held out by Alice, and the wicked enticements of Bertram, and a

mighty struggle betwixt good and evil at once took place.

Alice, in her holy enthusiasm no longer afraid of the fiend, fought desperately for the soul she longed to save, and as her final effort, she produced a letter from the deceased Princess Bertha, in which the redeemed mother warned her son against the fiend who sought to destroy him, and reminded him that she still prayed for him above.

This heavenly message at last prevailed over the wavering Robert, and decided him to adopt the better course; and refusing to be tempted longer by the wicked Bertram, he joyfully allowed himself to be led away by Alice to join his waiting bride at the altar.

The defeated fiend, realising that his cause was now lost for ever, instantly disappeared from the earth, and at the same moment a chorus of heavenly voices was heard rejoicing over the victory of a soul reclaimed from evil.



BALFE

THE BOHEMIAN GIRL

ONE bright summer day, towards the end of the eighteenth century, high revels were being held in the little city of Presburg, on the Danube; for a merry troupe of Austrian soldiers had just returned from the wars, flushed with success, and elated by their victorious invasion of the fair, but unhappy land of Poland.

The gayest scene of all took place in the beautiful grounds before the castle of Count Arnheim, their leader, for here preparations were being made for a great hunt, and the retainers and peasants on the estate were merry-making in honour of their lord's return.

Count Arnheim, accompanied by a number of neighbouring nobles whom he had invited to join in the chase, presently came forth from the castle, and as soon as he appeared, a loud shout of welcome arose from the whole party of holiday-makers.

Amongst these brilliant newcomers was the Count's nephew, Florestein, a conceited, foppish young man, whose gorgeous appearance was only surpassed by his foolish conversation, and in and out amongst the guests

tripped little Arline, the heiress of Arnheim—a lovely child, who was the joy of her widowed father's heart.

The Count gravely acknowledged the hearty welcome accorded to him with a sad smile, for since the death of his beautiful young wife a deep melancholy had settled upon him, and the only joy he now knew was his love for his only child, Arline, who alone could comfort him. He did not care to join in the chase, but having seen that his noble guests had all they needed for their sport, he tenderly caressed his beloved child once more, and returned to the castle.

The huntsmen now sounded their lively bugle calls, and when all were ready, the brilliant cavalcade moved off, climbing the hillsides, and disappearing behind the rocks and trees. The little Arline, after much coaxing, at length persuaded her attendant maid, Buda, to allow her to follow the hunters a short distance, and since all the retainers and peasants had also rushed off to watch the sport, the castle grounds were left quite deserted for a time.

But presently a handsome young stranger, dressed in the garb of a Polish officer, ran into the gardens in a breathless and exhausted state, seeking a hiding-place; for a band of Austrian soldiers, whose vigilance the proscribed exile could no longer elude, were now close upon his track, and every moment he expected them to come in sight.

Poor Thaddeus of Poland! A scion of a

noble family, he had bravely fought and bled for the freedom of his country, as a true patriot ; but now, defeated and pursued, he wandered forth homeless, without friends or fortune, and his only hope to find some place of present shelter.

A statue of the Austrian emperor before the entrance to the castle warned the unhappy exile that he was on the very threshold of his enemies, and that this was no safe haven for him, and, full of despair, he was just about to make his escape, when a band of wild-looking gipsies suddenly swarmed into the grounds from the woodland glade, and quickly surrounded him.

The sight of these merry gipsies brought a sudden hope of safety to the wretched Thaddeus, and turning to their leader, a light-hearted, clever rogue rejoicing in the name of Devilshoof, he cried out eagerly : " Let me join your ranks ! I am a homeless wanderer, without country, friends, or fortune, but I have youth, strength, and courage, which I will expend in your service if you will save me from my enemies, who are even now upon me ! "

Devilshoof and his gipsy companions were so pleased with the boldness of the hapless young stranger that they were glad enough to let him join their ranks, and as his pursuers could already be seen approaching, they quickly stripped off his soldier's garb and dressed him in gay gipsy clothes. Whilst this quick change was being made, a roll of

parchment with a seal attached fell to the ground, and Thaddeus, as he hastily snatched it up and hid it within his bosom, explained that it was his commission, from which he would never be parted, since it was the sole proof of his noble birth.

He had only just time to mingle with the other gipsies when the Austrian soldiers, who had pursued him so long, entered the grounds, and demanded news of the fugitive; but upon the wily Devilshoof carelessly announcing that a young Polish officer had passed up the hillside only a few minutes ago, they dashed off in that direction at once.

As they vanished out of sight, the triumphant Devilshoof seized the hand of Thaddeus in token of comradeship, swearing to befriend him all his life; and then he gaily led him off to watch the chase, followed by the rest of the gipsy band.

Meanwhile, the great hunt was going forward with much spirit, lively bugle calls sounding in every direction; but suddenly loud cries of alarm came from the woods, and a crowd of peasants rushed into the grounds, all talking at once, and seemingly full of distress. Upon the heels of this crowd came Thaddeus in his gipsy dress, and seeing that the people seemed distraught, he demanded what was wrong.

Learning from their excited cries that the little child, Arline—whom he had already seen and admired in the woods—had been

set upon by an infuriated stag, he was filled with dismay, and snatching up a rifle that lay on a seat near by, he hurried off to her aid. He quickly reached the spot, and killed the maddened animal, and then he returned to the grounds with the rescued child and her terrified attendant.

The wild cries of the peasants quickly brought Count Arnheim upon the scene, and on learning of the danger his precious child had been in, he clasped her in his arms with great relief. Seeing, however, that her arm had been wounded by the stag's horns, he bade the nurse carry her within doors, and attend to her hurts; and then, turning to Thaddeus, he seized his hand, and poured forth words of gratitude upon him for having saved the life of his beloved child, who was the one joy of his lonely heart.

On being next invited by the Count to partake of refreshment and join in the festivities, Thaddeus at first proudly refused, remembering that these were the enemies of his country; but the merry guests would not accept his refusal, and good-naturedly dragged him off to the refreshment tables that had been laid out near the castle steps. Here the company seated themselves, whilst a troupe of dancers went through a mazy figure before them, and presently the little Arline, with her wounded arm now bound up, appeared at an upper window with her nurse, to watch the revels.

When the wine-glasses had all been filled, the Count rose from his seat and invited his guests to drink to the health of their Emperor; but, though every one else rose to do honour to the pledge, Thaddeus remained seated, and did not touch his glass. The young fop, Florestein, soon noticed his attitude, and pointed it out to his uncle, and Count Arnheim immediately filled up another goblet and handed it to Thaddeus, challenging him to drink loyally to the health of the Emperor.

But the heart of Thaddeus was full of rage against the invader of his beloved Poland, and in answer to the Count's challenge, he seized the glass and dashed it to pieces at the foot of the Emperor's statue. Instantly there arose a chorus of indignation, and the guests leaped upon Thaddeus with drawn swords, and at the same moment, Devilshoof, the gipsy leader, who had been watching the scene for some time, sprang forward to protect his new comrade.

The enraged guests instantly attacked Thaddeus and Devilshoof, with intent to kill them both, but at a word from Count Arnheim, the huntsmen and retainers dragged the two gipsies apart, and marched them off in different directions. Thaddeus was led away towards the woods, where, however, he soon broke from his captors, and escaped to his gipsy friends; but Devilshoof was taken into the castle and locked in an upper room.

After this the guests settled down to their festivities once more, and the dancing and games continued with great merriment.

The waiting-maid, Buda, left her little charge for a short time, and went out into the grounds to assure the Count that his child was now recovering from her fright; and whilst she was away, the gipsy, Devils-hoof, took his revenge for capture.

Having escaped from his prison chamber during the absence of the guards, and reached the castle roof, he gently lowered himself down to the open window of Arline's room, and stepping on to the sill, he entered, and shut the window behind him. He then snatched up the little child, and hurried from the room with her, and making his way along the deserted passages, he escaped through a side door with his prize.

None of the revellers had noticed the gipsy's daring climb from the roof, and when Buda presently returned to Arline's chamber and found it empty, she was filled with amazement. Wildly she searched in every room, and then, uttering loud cries of alarm, she ran outside, declaring that the child had been stolen. Quickly, the nobles rushed into the castle, and finding that the captive gipsy had also vanished, they knew well enough that he had carried off the child in revenge.

When the Count heard the terrible news, he uttered a cry of despair, and at that moment, Devilshoof appeared on the hill-

side carrying Arline in his arms, and stifling her cries as he sprang from rock to rock. With a shout of rage, Count Arnheim and the nobles sprang after the spoiler, but Devilshoof ran to a deep gorge between two rocky cliffs, and having crossed over the tree-trunk that served as a bridge, he kicked it down into the gulf below, so that none might follow him further.

His baffled pursuers then took up their rifles, but the cunning gipsy held the little Arline in front of him, and they dared not fire. Count Arnheim, in a frenzy of despair, was about to fling himself into the gorge, but his guests seized his arms, and whilst they carried him back senseless to the castle, Devilshoof, still holding the child as a shield, made his escape, and vanished into the depths of the forest.

Twelve years had passed away, and the gipsy tribe, after many wanderings, were again encamped in the city of Presburg. On the open side of a quiet street the tent of the gipsy queen was pitched, and here, one moonlit summer night, Arline lay sleeping, whilst Thaddeus watched beside her.

All was quiet and peaceful, for it was growing late, and only one inn kept its lights burning; but presently a party of gipsies, wrapped in dark cloaks, entered the street, headed by the bold Devilshoof, who had brought them there to rob the late revellers as they left the inn. Quietly

they crouched in the shadows and dark corners to await their prey, and in a short time their patience was rewarded, for a gorgeously-clad figure soon issued from the inn, and staggered down the street with uneven steps. This was Florestein, the foppish nephew of Count Arnheim, who, regarding himself as the heir of his wealthy uncle since the kidnapping of his little cousin Arline, squandered his own fortune recklessly, and spent all his time in feasting and revellings.

Seeing in this foolish roysterer an easy and profitable victim, Devilshoof accosted him at once, calling his companions about him at the same time; and in a few minutes they had stripped him of every valuable he had carried, for Florestein, being a coward as well as a fop, was too terrified even to cry out.

Having possessed himself of a rich jewelled medallion and chain, Devilshoof made his escape, leaving his companions to finish what he had begun; but whilst the exulting gipsies were eagerly dividing their spoils, another cloaked figure suddenly appeared in their midst. Full of surprise and dismay, they started back, for the cloaked figure was that of their own gipsy queen, and they could read anger in her mien.

With a haughty gesture she bade them instantly restore all that they had stolen from their victim, and not daring to disobey her command, the gipsies sullenly

handed back the rings, chains, and other jewels they had been so eager to secure.

"Is that all?" demanded the queen, and Florestein, in a voice trembling with fright, replied that he yet lacked a handsome gold medallion, set with diamonds, worth all the rest. The gipsies explained that Devils-hoof had gone off with this jewel as his prize, and then the queen led Florestein away, saying she would protect him to a place of safety, and beckoning to the gipsies to follow her.

When the street was quiet once more, Arline, who had been awakened by the noise, arose and came forth from the tent into the moonlight, followed by Thaddeus. These two had grown to be lovers during the years that had passed, and they only awaited the gipsy queen's pleasure to join their hands in marriage.

Arline had no knowledge of her noble birth, though she had always felt herself to be different from the careless gipsies with whom she lived, and to-night, as she stood in the moonlight, she told Thaddeus of a dream she had just awakened from, which seemed to bear a message for her. She had dreamt that she dwelt in marble halls, amidst great riches and splendour, bearing a high ancestral name; that countless suitors sought her hand; and yet, which charmed her most of all, that Thaddeus still loved her just the same.

When her story came to an end, she begged her lover to tell her the secret of her birth,

for she felt that he knew it, since he had already told her that a certain scar upon her arm had been caused by the charge of a wild stag, from which danger he had saved her years ago; but for answer Thaddeus only showered kisses upon her, for he knew full well that if he disclosed her true birth they must be parted.

Whilst they were thus folded in each other's arms, the gipsy queen—who also loved Thaddeus—suddenly returned and advancing towards Arline, she angrily demanded how she thus dared aspire to the love of one who was the chosen lover of her queen. But Arline was not afraid of her rival's anger; and standing aside, she said that Thaddeus should choose between them. Instantly Thaddeus folded her in his arms again, and then Arline, with a triumphant smile, turned towards the other gipsies who had now gathered round, and declared that it was their desire to be wed. Then Devilshoof, whose delight it was to make mischief and stir up jealousy, reminded the queen that it was her duty and right as ruler of their tribe to join the hands of those of her subjects who desired to be united; and the queen, afraid of losing her authority should she refuse, came slowly forward, and haughtily placed the hand of Arline in that of Thaddeus, according to the gipsy custom of betrothal.

But she was full of inward disappointment and rage, and when Arline and Thaddeus presently wandered off in the moonlight, she

turned upon Devilshoof, and passionately accused him of having brought this evil hour upon her, declaring she would only pardon him on condition that he yielded up to her the jewelled medallion he had stolen that night.

Devilshoof, though he feared naught else, dared not disobey the queen of his tribe, so he delivered up the medallion, but muttered vengeance as he strode away. The gipsy queen also thought of revenge, and as she hid the jewel in her dress, she laid a cunning plan for bringing trouble upon her rival by means of it.

Next day a great fair was held in Presburg, and all the gipsy tribe went to join in the revels. Arline and the other Bohemian maids took their tambourines, and sang and danced for the amusement of the holiday-makers; and many of the gay youths of the town sought to obtain favours from the pretty strangers.

Amongst these revellers was the fop, Florestein, decked in all his bravest attire, who was greatly struck with the beauty and grace of Arline, and seeing her standing alone one time, he swaggered up and made flattering remarks to her. Finding that his foolish speeches were not listened to, he next tried to snatch a kiss, but to his surprise and dismay, Arline turned sharply round upon him and boxed his ears!

As he turned away, angry and discomfited, the gipsy queen, who had been watching the scene, recognised him as the roysterer

whom she had protected the night before, and running after Arline, she fastened the jewelled medallion round her neck, saying that it was a reward for her pretty conduct, but knowing full well that Florestein would soon see it, and accuse the girl of theft.

Having thus carried out the evil plan she had laid, the queen left the fair-ground, and soon afterwards the rest of the tribe departed also. But just as Thaddeus and Arline were moving away, Florestein caught sight of his medallion hanging round the maiden's neck, and hurrying forward, he loudly accused her of having stolen it from him, rejoicing to thus bring trouble upon one who had repulsed his advances. Arline indignantly defended herself, but at the command of Florestein, she was quickly surrounded by the city guards, who seized and bore her off in triumph to the Hall of Justice.

Here Count Arnheim sat, waiting to do justice on those offenders who should be brought before him that day; for his high position had made him the Chief Judge of the district. The twelve years that had gone by had aged him very much, for all his efforts to trace his stolen daughter had been in vain; but never for a moment had he altogether given up hope, and never did he cease to think of the sweet little maid who had been the only comfort of his lonely heart.

He was thinking of her now as he sat in the Hall of Justice on the day of the fair; but presently his sad thoughts were rudely

interrupted by the entrance of the city guards, with Arline in their midst, and Florestein bringing up the rear.

With swaggering, self-satisfied demeanour, Florestein approached his uncle, and in angry, excited tones, accused Arline of having stolen his diamond medallion ; but Count Arnheim, greatly struck with the beauty and innocent looks of the young girl, who reminded him strangely of his own lost child, begged her to defend herself.

Then Arline explained in clear, sweet tones that the jewel had been but a short time ago bestowed upon her by the gipsy queen, who, she now saw, had intended to bring trouble upon her by this very gift ; and she proudly declared that, rather than be accused of such baseness as common theft, she would take her own life. She drew a dagger as she spoke, but ere she had raised her arm, Count Arnheim, whose chords of memory had again been touched by the maiden's sweet voice, sprang forward and snatched the weapon from her hand.

His action was so sudden that Arline's loose sleeve slipped back from her elbow, disclosing the rough scar upon her white arm, and as the Count's gaze fell upon this wound-mark, he turned suddenly pale, and in trembling accents demanded eagerly how she came by it. Full of surprise at his tone, Arline repeated the story of the maddened stag that Thaddeus had told to her, and Count Arnheim, knowing now beyond a doubt that this beautiful Bohemian maiden

was indeed his own long-lost child, clasped her in his arms with frantic joy, declaring to all that she was his beloved daughter.

And now Arline was quickly restored to the high position she had been born to, and as soon as the young girl had recovered from the strangeness of her new life, the proud and happy Count sent out invitations for a magnificent *fête* and ball, that he might introduce his lovely daughter to his friends in fitting style.

But on the night of the ball, Arline, dressed in richest garments, sat alone in one of the splendid salons of the castle, with a sad look upon her face; for she was thinking of her faithful lover, Thaddeus, and felt that she could never enjoy her new prosperity unless he shared it with her. The Count and his foppish nephew had just left her, at her own request, and as they went off to receive the first guests, she knew that Florestein, whom she greatly despised, was already petitioning her hand in marriage.

With a heavy sigh, her thoughts turned quickly to the free and happy past, and at that moment, the low window of the salon was suddenly opened, and Devilshoof entered from the grounds beyond. He begged her not to be alarmed, since he had but brought a message from his tribe, asking her to return to her old friends; and as he spoke, the window was opened again, and Thaddeus entered the room.

With a cry of joy, Arline rushed into her lover's arms, and when Thaddeus besought

her to remember him sometimes, even amidst her wealth and splendour, she declared that she cared naught for wealth and splendour unless he would love her still. As they stood there, folded in each other's arms, Count Arnheim's voice was heard as he conducted his guests towards the room; and Arline, fully aware that this was not the time to present her gipsy lover to her father, hastily thrust Thaddeus into a curtained recess, whilst Devilshoof escaped through the window.

In another moment Count Arnheim entered the salon with the early guests, and with a proud smile, he took Arline by the hand, and introduced her to his noble friends.

Now, whilst Arline and Thaddeus had been rejoicing together, the gipsy queen had watched them without the window, with bitter rage and jealousy in her heart; for she still loved Thaddeus, and followed him wherever he went. She saw Arline hide him within the recess, and as the gaily-dressed guests afterwards trooped in, she quickly thought out a plan for revenging herself upon her rival. Opening the window, she softly entered the salon, and making her way to Count Arnheim, she threw off her cloak, and declared that she had a message for him.

Greatly surprised at the appearance of this strange figure, the Count bade her speak on; and with a triumphant glance towards the now pale and trembling Arline, the gipsy queen cried: "The daughter you prize so fondly is deceiving you! She loves a gipsy

of my tribe, and he is even now hidden in this room!"

She pointed to the recess as she spoke, and Count Arnheim, stepping forward, drew aside the curtain, and Thaddeus appeared before the eyes of the astonished guests.

Full of indignation and disappointment, the proud Count poured forth bitter reproaches upon the daughter he now felt to be unworthy of his love, and drawing his sword, he passionately bade Thaddeus depart ere he took his life.

The gipsy queen seized Thaddeus by the hand, and triumphantly tried to drag him away with her; but Arline ran to her lover's side, and turning towards the bewildered guests, begged them to leave her alone with her father. When the guests had all retired to the salon beyond, and only her father and lover remained, she fell on her knees and implored the Count to consent to her marriage with Thaddeus, whom she loved so dearly, declaring that she would rather die than live without him; but the Count only exclaimed the more against the disgrace to his name should his daughter wed an outcast gipsy.

On hearing this, the ancestral pride of Thaddeus could no longer be restrained, and caring naught for the danger it might bring, he haughtily declared that he was of as equally pure and noble birth as the Count himself, even though he wore the garb of a gipsy. He then told the whole story of his exile from Poland, and his reason for joining

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the gipsy tribe, and drawing forth his commission, from which he had never parted, he handed it to the Count as the proof of what he said.

Count Arnheim was greatly moved at the sad story told by the exile, and when he had glanced at the commission and read there that Thaddeus was indeed of noble birth, he took him by the hand, saying that the feuds of their countries should be forgotten, and that they should be friends. He then placed Arline's hand in that of Thaddeus, and the lovers embraced with great joy.

Meanwhile the queen of the gipsies, who had left the salon when the guests retired, had gone in search of a young gipsy whom she knew to be devoted to her service, and bidding him bring his musket and follow her, she once more crept round to the open window of the salon. With gleaming eyes she watched the three figures within, and then, when she saw the lovers folded in each other's arms, she turned to the gipsy at her side, and, in a transport of jealous rage, bade him shoot Thaddeus instantly.

But Devilshoof had also followed closely upon her track, suspecting her evil design, and just as the musket was raised, by a dexterous movement he diverted the young gipsy's aim, and turned the muzzle upon the queen. There was a loud report, and a shriek, and the queen of the gipsies fell to the ground, slain by the shot she had intended for her lover.

FRA DIAVOLO

ONE bright Easter Eve, early in the nineteenth century, a lively group of carbineers were gathered together in the inn of Terracina near Naples, drinking success to the enterprise they were engaged upon; for they were just about to attack a horde of brigands supposed to be in that neighbourhood, and were expecting to meet with many exciting adventures.

The captain of the outlaw band, Fra Diavolo, was the most celebrated bandit in Italy, and fully justified his sinister name, for his daring raids and impudent roguery had made him a terror to the country-side, and the mere mention of his name caused peaceful travellers to tremble in their shoes.

All previous attempts to capture the cunning outlaw had proved ineffectual, so when at last a troop of carbineers was sent out from Naples to lie in wait for the whole band, joy was felt in every village round about, and the peasants hoped to be freed from their dreaded enemy at last.

The soldiers had been awaiting news at the inn of Terracina, but on learning that Fra Diavolo and his rogues had been seen

in the neighbourhood, they at once received orders to start off in pursuit. In merry haste, they drank the stirrup-cups poured out for them by old Matteo the inn-keeper, and his pretty daughter, Zerlina; for a price had been set upon the head of Fra Diavolo, and they were eager to win the reward.

But the captain of this gay troop, a handsome young brigadier, named Lorenzo, sat alone at a side table full of gloom; and when the inn-keeper presently invited all the company to attend the wedding of his daughter with a neighbouring farmer on the morrow, the look of sadness on his face deepened still more.

For Lorenzo, on arriving at the inn, had quickly fallen in love with the pretty Zerlina himself, and when he had declared his passion for her, the maiden had gladly responded with an answering love as deep and tender as his own. But Matteo, the inn-keeper, would not hear of his daughter wedding a poor brigadier who had naught but his wretched pay to live upon, and to settle the matter he hastily arranged a marriage for her with Francesco, a well-to-do young farmer who came forward as a suitor just at this time. Negotiations were quickly made, and the ceremony fixed to take place on Easter Morn; and now, on the evening before, Zerlina, compelled to obey her parent's will, was bidden to say farewell to her portionless lover.

Whilst the two were whispering together

in a sad undertone, a loud noise of excited voices was suddenly heard without, and next moment a lady and gentleman rushed wildly into the inn, both dishevelled, and showing signs of great alarm. They declared in agitated tones that they had just been set upon by a band of fierce brigands, who had robbed them of all their jewels and available property, and they added that it was only by leaving the robbers in undisputed possession of their travelling carriage that they had been able to escape with their lives.

Whilst Zerlina ran to attend to the exhausted lady, the gentleman, who was extremely fussy in manner, introduced himself as Lord Allcash, an English peer of great wealth touring through Italy with his newly-wedded wife, explaining that it was scarcely a mile away that their postillion had been stopped by the bandits.

On hearing this, Lorenzo exclaimed that it must have been the very band of outlaws he had been sent to capture—that of the famous Fra Diavolo—and calling his men together, he bade them march forth to the hillside at once. Full of joy, the carbineers sprang to their feet and hurried from the inn, eager for their expected prey; and with a last sad farewell to the now weeping Zerlina, Lorenzo quickly followed.

Lord Allcash immediately sat down to write out a notice, offering a reward for the recovery of his stolen property; and his wife, having noticed the tender parting

between Zerlina and her lover, drew the girl aside and asked the cause of her trouble. Having learnt that it was only a matter of dowry that kept these two loving hearts apart, the lady, being of a sentimental disposition, persuaded her husband to make the reward a thousand ducats, hoping that the prize would be gained by the handsome Lorenzo, who would thus become an eligible suitor for the inn-keeper's daughter.

The notice was then fastened in a prominent place, and Lord and Lady Allcash were just about to retire to the private apartments that had been hastily prepared for them, when a splendid carriage suddenly drew up at the inn door. A handsome man, of gay, *debonnair* appearance, stepped lightly to the ground, and bowed gracefully to the English tourists; and Lady Allcash, to her delight, recognised a charming fellow-traveller who had followed in their wake for several days past, and with whom she had more than once indulged in a pleasant flirtation.

But her husband uttered an angry exclamation, for being somewhat dull and stupid himself, he was already jealous of his coquettish wife's brilliant admirer, and seizing her by the hand, he led her into an inner chamber, very much against her will.

The gay newcomer, who gave his name as the Marquis of San Carlo, entered the inn and ordered a repast, announcing that he meant to remain the night; and old Matteo bustled his servants about in high good-

humour, blessing the good fortune that had brought two great lords to his hostelry on the same day.

He informed the Marquis, with many humble apologies, that he himself would be absent from the inn until morning, since he intended to spend the night with his future son-in-law, Francesco, who was to be married to his daughter on the morrow; but he assured him that every possible attention would be accorded to him during his absence.

So far from expressing annoyance at this announcement, the Marquis showed signs of pleasure, and as he sat down to the supper that had been quickly spread before him, he asked the landlord for the news of the neighbourhood. Matteo informed him that the talk of the country-side at that time was all of the daring bandit, Fra Diavolo, whose lawless band had only a few hours ago set upon and robbed the rich English lord and lady whom he had seen on entering the inn, and seeing that the Marquis was inclined to scoff at the notion of brigands, he bade his daughter sing to their guest a ballad well known to the peasants round about, in which the wild deeds of the famous robber were set forth in glowing colours.

Just as the song came to an end, two rough, swarthy men, wrapped in dark, ragged cloaks, entered the inn, and asked for shelter for the night; and when Matteo, suspicious of their rascally looks, declared that he did not harbour vagabonds, the Marquis good-

naturedly begged him to grant their request, saying that he would gladly pay for their board and lodging. Matteo, though somewhat surprised at the great lord's generous offer, made no more objection, but ordered one of the servants to provide the tramps with food, and afterwards to lodge them in the barn; and then, bidding his noble guest farewell for the night, he set off to the farm of Francesco, calling to Zerlina to accompany him part of the way.

No sooner had the inn-keeper and his daughter departed, than the two vagabonds, casting hasty glances around, approached the Marquis and began to talk familiarly with him; for, though old Matteo little imagined it, the dashing guest he had served so obsequiously was in reality none other than the famous Fra Diavolo himself, now engaged on one of his most desperate enterprises! Having heard that a rich English lord and his lady were travelling through Italy, the daring brigand had determined to relieve them of all their available belongings, and to this end, being of gentlemanly aspect and manners, he had provided himself with fashionable attire, and made their acquaintance under the name of the Marquis of San Carlo. The coquettish Lady Allcash had quickly fallen under the fascinating spell of the brilliant Marquis, who, regardless of the fussy husband's black looks, had flirted desperately with her from the beginning, and following in their wake from hotel to

hotel, he had discovered, under the pretence of friendly interest, the exact amount of all the valuables the wealthy pair had brought with them from England.

Having learnt that Lord Allcash intended to bank the sum of twenty thousand gold pieces at Leghorn, the disguised brigand had given orders to his band to waylay the travellers on their journey thither, and to possess themselves, not only of the gold, but also of the lady's handsome jewels; and he had also bidden two of the gang to follow him to the inn of Terracina, to give him an account of their raid.

These two rogues, whose names were Beppo and Giacomo, now told their daring leader that they had stopped the English travellers in the spot agreed upon; but though they had easily secured the diamonds and other jewels, they declared they had been unable to find the gold. On hearing this, Fra Diavolo was disappointed and perplexed, but declaring that he would quickly discover the whereabouts of the money, he bade the bandits retire to the barn to await his further orders.

As the two rascals departed, Lady Allcash entered the parlour, announcing carelessly that her husband was resting, and, being somewhat dull, she had come to indulge in a little conversation with the charming Marquis; and the disguised bandit, determined to make the most of this fortunate circumstance, plunged at once into another amiable flirtation with the frivolous lady

They were, however, quickly interrupted by the angry husband, who had no intention of being supplanted by a mere stranger; but the pretended Marquis, with careless ease, refused to quarrel, and cleverly inveigled the duped one into friendly conversation.

With great cunning he expressed sympathy with Lord Allcash in the loss of his valuables, enquiring casually if he had managed to save the large sum of gold he had been conveying to Leghorn; and with conceited pride, the Englishman replied that his own wits had served him in this matter. Having heard that bandits were in the neighbourhood, he had changed all the gold into bank-bills, which he had caused to be sewn up in the coat he was wearing, and also in the large sleeves of his lady's gown, and by this simple ruse he had managed to cheat the robbers.

Whilst they were talking together, and Fra Diavolo was inwardly rejoicing at the information he had gleaned, approaching footsteps were heard outside, and next moment, Lorenzo and his carbineers hurried into the inn, exclaiming that they had gained a victory. Having cut off the brigands' retreat, they had caught the whole band in an ambush, and attacking them unawares, they had quickly killed twenty of their number, after which the remainder had fled away in a panic.

Zerlina, who had also returned, quickly hastened to the side of her lover, rejoicing to

see him again so soon ; but Lorenzo declared that they must set off again immediately, for they had not yet captured the leader of the band, and could not rest until that deed was accomplished. He had, however, good news for Lord Allcash, whose lost valuables he had himself recovered from one of the bandits, and to the great delight of the travellers, he placed their jewels before them once more.

Lady Allcash now announced that Lorenzo was entitled to the reward offered for the recovery of the jewels, and demanding her husband's pocket-book, which he had already replenished from his hidden store of bank-bills, she took therefrom a note for a thousand ducats, and handed it to the young brigadier. Overjoyed at the good fortune that had so suddenly made him even richer than his rival Francesco, Lorenzo clasped Zerlina in his arms with delight, knowing now that there was nothing to keep them apart ; and declaring that he should return on the morrow to wed her, in spite of the farmer, he rushed off with his men to search for the brigand chief.

All this time the disguised Fra Diavolo had been gnashing his teeth with rage, inwardly furious at the defeat of his band, and vowing vengeance for the death of his brave rogues, yet outwardly compelled to preserve the unconcerned demeanour of the gay Marquis ; but as soon as an opportunity occurred, he slipped from the inn and made his way to the barn, where Beppo and Giacomo had been lodged for the night.

He quickly arranged a scheme for again robbing the English travellers of their jewels, and also of the bank-bills hidden in their clothing, and having bidden the bandits to join him a short time later, he returned to the inn parlour to gather further information for the perfecting of his plans.

It was now getting late into the night, and at last Zerlina led Lord and Lady Allcash to their sleeping-chamber, which lay beyond her own, and in answer to the lady's request, she remained a little while to assist her in disrobing.

Whilst the maiden was thus absent, her own chamber was entered by the supposed Marquis, who had discovered that this was the only means by which the English lord's apartment could be reached, and creeping on tiptoe to the window, he opened it to admit Beppo and Giacomo, who were now waiting outside. Informing them in a whisper that they would have to wait until the girl had also retired to rest before they could accomplish their purpose, the bandit captain led them towards a large lumber-cupboard with glass doors at one end of the room, and here the three concealed themselves just as Zerlina returned.

Having already ascertained that all in the house had retired to rest, Zerlina at once prepared for bed, and as she undressed, she sang softly to herself, for joy was in her heart. She knew that her father would no longer refuse her in marriage to her beloved Lorenzo, since the brigadier had now a fortune even larger

than Francesco's, and she felt that the young farmer could soon be persuaded to resign a bride who would never have loved him.

Catching sight of her pretty figure in the mirror on her dressing-table, she was suddenly struck with her own good looks, and with a thrill of innocent pleasure she uttered aloud a few words of admiration for the charming reflection before her, to the great amusement of the hidden bandits, who kept indulging in sly peeps through the glass doors of the cupboard, and could hear every word uttered in the room beyond. Several times they nearly betrayed their presence, but Zerlina was too much occupied with her own pleasant thoughts to think of any lurking danger. She was soon ready for rest, and having uttered a prayer for protection during the night, she put out the light and retired to bed.

Having waited until the maiden's regular breathing assured them that she was asleep, Fra Diavolo and his two rascals crept forth from their hiding-place and made their way towards the door of Lord Allcash's apartment; but on passing the bed, Beppo suggested in a whisper that they ran a great risk in leaving Zerlina free to rouse the household, should she be awakened by any noise they might make. Fra Diavolo replied that if he had any such fear, he had better silence the maiden once and for all, and seizing his dagger, Beppo crept to the bedside.

But just as he raised his arm to strike, Zerlina murmured softly in her sleep, repeating the sweet childish words of her simple prayer, and the brigand, conscience-stricken, let his arm fall limply to his side again.

At that moment a loud knocking was heard outside at the inn door, and the voice of Lorenzo shouted eagerly for admission; and finding that their enterprise must now be delayed a little longer, Fra Diavolo and his companions quickly withdrew to the cupboard once more, just as Zerlina, awakened by the noise, sprang out of bed.

Hastily dressing herself, the girl ran to open the window, and discovering to her joy that Lorenzo and his carbineers were waiting below, she threw a key down to her lover, bidding him let the men into the kitchen. She then finished dressing, and was just about to go below, when Lorenzo, impatient to greet her, entered the room; and almost at the same time Lord Allcash issued forth in hasty attire from the chamber beyond, indignantly demanding the cause of the disturbance.

Lorenzo explained that he and his men had hopes of soon securing Fra Diavolo, for after pursuing him in a wrong direction on the hillsides for some time, they had casually learnt from a peasant that their quarry had been seen on the Terracina road. They had consequently retraced their steps, but deeming it necessary for his men to have a few hours' rest, having been long on the

march, he had called in at Matteo's hostelry for that purpose. Zerlina quickly ran off to provide the carbineers with food, but Lord Allcash detained the brigadier a few minutes longer to listen to a pompous tirade against a country where peaceful travellers were set upon by brigands in the daytime, and roused thus rudely from their slumbers at night.

Suddenly they were startled by a loud noise from within the cupboard, for Beppo, by an awkward movement, had accidentally overturned some heavy object he had not noticed in the darkness. Fra Diavolo, however, was instantly ready with a subtle scheme to save the situation, and as Lorenzo and Lord Allcash crossed to the cupboard to discover the cause of the noise, he stepped coolly forth, smiling and bowing with the easy grace of the brilliant Marquis.

In answer to the indignant questions poured upon him, he blandly declared that he had concealed himself in the cupboard to keep a tender assignation, and by the aid of his clever wit, he led the Englishman to suppose that his intended meeting was to have been with Lady Allcash, whilst Lorenzo imagined that Zerlina was the expected fair one.

The young brigadier, filled with grief at this seeming proof of Zerlina's defection, instantly challenged the man he supposed to be her lover to a mortal duel, a challenge which was gaily accepted by the pretended Marquis, who arranged to meet him at seven o'clock next morning in a rocky pass near by.

Lady Allcash, attracted by the angry voices, now appeared on the scene, only to be met by indignant upbraidings from her outraged husband, and when Zerlina presently returned to announce that food was ready below, Lorenzo turned coldly aside, and refused even to speak to her.

All was now confusion and dismay, and in the midst of the general disturbance, Fra Diavolo and his companions managed to escape unobserved from the inn.

Bidding Beppo and Giacomo return to the barn, and there await his further instructions, which he would convey to them next morning in a note concealed in a hollow tree near the inn, the bandit captain hastened to his familiar haunts on the mountain-side, and there, with the remnant of his scattered band, he arranged a third plot for the capture of the English travellers' wealth. It was decided that when Lorenzo came to keep his appointment for the duel in the rocky pass, he should be instantly surrounded and killed by a few ambushed rascals, and that when all the party from the inn had departed to the village church for Zerlina's wedding, and the carbineers had started on their march, the captain and remainder of the band should make a quiet raid on the hostelry and possess themselves of the treasure they had so long desired. Having completed his plans, Fra Diavolo wrote them down on a note for Beppo and Giacomo, bidding them to give him notice

directly the inn was deserted by ringing the bell of a little hermitage on the hill-side, and this message he slipped into the hollow tree agreed upon.

Just before seven o'clock next morning Matteo arrived at the inn with the young farmer, Francesco, and the rest of the wedding party, and poor Zerlina, who had vainly tried to learn the cause of Lorenzo's sudden coldness to her, was filled with despair. Seeing that the young brigadier was just about to depart with his carbineers in search of the brigand chief, and was making no attempt to prevent her marriage with Francesco, she ran to him once again, imploring him to say in what way she had offended him; and Lorenzo, still believing her to be false, at last declared in tones of suppressed anger that she had betrayed him by concealing another lover in her chamber the night before. He then hastened away to place himself at the head of the troop, remembering his appointment with the Marquis at seven o'clock, and his distracted sweetheart was left more mystified than ever.

At that moment, however, her attention was attracted to the two vagabonds, Beppo and Giacomo, who were drinking together at a little side-table close beside her; for having secured their captain's note, they were now awaiting the opportunity to carry out his instructions. Seeing Zerlina approach, Beppo nudged his companion, reminding him that

this was the same pretty maid they had watched at her toilet the previous evening, and carried away by the amusing recollection, he repeated in a loud whisper the words of admiration she had uttered when standing before her mirror.

Every word of this careless whisper was heard by Zerlina, who was filled with amazement, and feeling sure that some mysterious plot was on foot, she called aloud to the carbineers to seize the two tramps, declaring that they had just repeated certain words she remembered to have uttered when she believed herself alone in her chamber the night before.

Instantly the two rogues were seized, in spite of their struggles to escape, and as the carbineers searched them for proof of their guilt, they found the note containing the whole of Fra Diavolo's cunning plot.

Lorenzo, determined that the famous robber should not escape his hands this time, quickly decided to catch him in his own trap, and bidding the wedding guests retire within the inn, he ordered the carbineers to conceal themselves on the hillside down which Fra Diavolo intended to come. He next despatched Beppo to toll the hermitage bell, with two soldiers hidden close by, covering him with their carbines; and then, concealing himself behind some bushes with Zerlina and Lord and Lady Allcash, he waited to see the result of his ruse.

The wretched Beppo, not daring to disobey the command given him, began to toll the hermitage bell, and almost immediately afterwards Fra Diavolo appeared on the hill-top. Although now attired in the gorgeous garb of a brigand chief, the hidden watchers instantly recognised him as the gay Marquis who had so successfully deceived them all, and, amazed at the discovery, Lorenzo's contrite eyes sought Zerlina's in a silent appeal for forgiveness, whilst Lord and Lady Allcash joined hands in token of renewed good-fellowship.

Seeing that Beppo still tolled the bell undisturbed, Fra Diavolo concluded that all was well, and gaily descended the hillside with confidence; but at a sign from Lorenzo, the carbineers sprang suddenly from their ambush, and seized him ere he had time to realise his danger. In another moment his arms were tightly bound and shackled, and as he was led away between two files of carbineers, a loud cry of triumph arose from the spectators now assembled below, who all rejoiced together at the capture of the dreaded bandit.

A few hours later, Zerlina's wedding was celebrated in the little village church, and the happy bridegroom who joined hands with her that day was not Francesco the farmer, but Lorenzo, the proud vanquisher of the famous Fra Diavolo.

MIGNON

ONE festal day, a lively scene was taking place in the streets of a certain little German country town; for gay crowds of holiday-makers had all turned out in their bravest attire to make merry from morn till night. A troupe of gipsy mountebanks had just arrived in the town, and seeing that a holiday was in progress, they had quickly set about regaling the idle populace with an impromptu entertainment. A merry crowd soon gathered around them, and loud bursts of applause greeted the efforts of the gipsies, who accompanied their wild songs and fantastic dances with the twanging of guitars and tambourines.

Amongst these spectators was one who seemed almost regardless of the gay scene before him: a noble-looking old man with long grey elf-locks, whose shabby, way-worn garments, and a harp which he carried, proclaimed him to be a wandering minstrel. There was a look of unutterable grief in this old man's eyes, together with a strange restless gleam, as though the soul within sought constantly for some beloved object it never

could find, and every now and again he would break forth into wild snatches of song, full of heart-broken sadness, which were received by the by-standers with good-humoured indulgence, for old Lothario the Harper was a familiar figure to them, and it was well known that some great sorrow had rendered him half-crazed.

The gipsy mountebanks found their audience an appreciative one, and seeing that the impromptu entertainment was likely to prove profitable, the chief, a fierce-looking rascal named Giarno, announced that Mignon, the fairest and most talented of their gipsy maidens, would now give an exhibition of the famous egg-dance. So saying, he thrust forward a beautiful young girl, in whose soft dark eyes fear and scornful resistance seemed struggling for the mastery; and it was soon plain to all that she regarded the lusty Giarno as a cruel tyrant, whom she was at last determined to defy, for, upon being bidden by him to commence her dance, she utterly refused to do so.

Alas, poor Mignon! Of noble birth, she had been stolen from her home in early childhood by the gipsies, with whom she had been brought up, and Giarno the Mountebank, seeing in her beauty and grace a means of attracting audiences and securing gain, had compelled her to dance in the streets of every town and village they passed through, frequently beating her cruelly

when, through fatigue or misery, she failed to please him.

For many years the poor child, through fear of her harsh master, was forced to obey his will; but as she advanced to maidenhood, all her natural high-born instincts of refinement and modesty revolted against the publicity of the life she was compelled to lead, and now, at last, she determined to resist. Outraged by the free glances of admiration cast upon her by the careless gallants in the crowd, she shrank back and tried to escape, and when Giarno roughly seized her by the arms and angrily ordered her again to dance, she announced boldly that she would not perform. Enraged at her refusal, the fierce Giarno seized his stick, and declared that he would beat her unless she obeyed him instantly; but, in spite of his threats, brave little Mignon still declined to do his bidding.

The old harper, Lothario, had been watching this scene with eager interest, feeling himself drawn to the pretty Mignon by some unaccountable attraction, and on seeing the poor girl shrink back from the upraised arm of her tyrant master, he hurried forward, calling out as he approached: "Courage, maiden! I will protect you!"

Before he reached her side, however, a second defender arrived upon the scene: a handsome youth, who, rushing forward and snatching the stick from Giarno's hand,

bade him promise instantly not to harm the gipsy girl, as he valued his life. Cowed by this sudden onslaught, the bully drew back, muttering apologetically that he did but seek additional gains by the performance of his dancing-girl; but upon receiving from his assailant a few coins in compensation for his loss, he was contented, and withdrew with Mignon from the crowd.

The bold cavalier who had thus so timely come to the rescue of the pretty gipsy maid was a Viennese student, by name Wilhelm Meister, who, being young, rich, and gay, was for the time being amusing himself by travelling from place to place, being eager to see the world, and engage in the excitements of youth. His natural generosity and kindly pity had led him to interfere on Mignon's behalf, and now, as he strolled away to a refreshment garden near by, he felt elated by his encounter, and longed for further adventures.

Now it happened that the whole of this little scene had been witnessed from a balcony opposite by two strangers to the town: an actor named Laertes, and Filina, his leading lady, an actress of much beauty, and fascinating but coquettish manners; and being greatly struck by the handsome appearance and gallant behaviour of Wilhelm Meister, the lady desired to make his acquaintance, hoping to add him to her already long list of admirers.

Consequently, the two made their way to

the refreshment gardens, and here Laertes soon entered into friendly conversation with Wilhelm, telling him of the misfortunes of the strolling theatrical company to which he belonged, and of the attractive charms of the lively Filina.

Wilhelm was greatly amused by the exaggerated conversation of the actor, and when he was presently introduced to Filina, he was so delighted with the sparkling looks of the fair actress that he quickly fell under the spell of her fascinations. He walked about with her for some time, and when she at length left him, he determined to see her again, in spite of the fact that Laertes had warned him that she was a born coquette.

As he came away from the garden, he met the gipsy troupe once more, and suddenly catching sight of her defender, the grateful Mignon sprang forward at once, and kissing his hand, began to pour forth heart-felt thanks for his protection of her. Wilhelm was touched by her simple gratitude, and began to question her, being struck by her refinement and ethereal beauty, and then Mignon told him her pitiful little story, how she had been stolen by the gipsies when scarcely more than a babe, and how harshly she had been treated by them since.

She could remember little of her early life, except that one terrible day, when playing near the brink of a clear blue lake, she had been suddenly seized and borne off by the lawless Bohemians; but her memory

being stirred by the questions put to her, she presently broke out into a rapturous recollection of her native country, describing it as a land of orange-trees and roses, of soft breezes and everlasting blue skies, from which Wilhelm gathered her home to have been in Italy.

Whilst they were talking together, the mountebank, Giarno, approached, and remarking that Wilhelm seemed to have taken a fancy to Mignon, he suggested that the young student should buy the girl's freedom, paying him a ransom for her, upon receipt of which he would renounce all rights in his favour. Eager to rescue the poor girl from so harsh a master, Wilhelm gladly agreed to the proposal, paying over to the gipsy a hundred ducats at once; and Giarno quickly departed, rejoicing at the good bargain he had made.

Mignon, delighted at the thought of her freedom, again poured forth grateful thanks upon her benefactor, for whom a passionate love, excited by his generosity and pity, was already springing up in her maiden heart, and then, turning to old Lothario the Harper, who was also hovering near, still attracted by some deep feeling he could not fathom, she begged him to rejoice with her.

Leaving the now happy girl with Lothario, Wilhelm strolled back to the gardens, where he was soon joined again by Filina and Laertes, who announced that they had just

received the news of an important engagement. A certain Baron Rosenberg, who was entertaining a company of noble, guests at his castle in the neighbourhood, had instructed the strolling players to perform at a splendid *fête* he was giving in their honour, and Filina, determined not to be parted from her new admirer, now suggested that Wilhelm should accompany them as poet attached to the company.

Wilhelm, just ripe for such an adventure as this, and dazzled by the charms of the coquettish Filina, with whom he already fancied himself in love, readily agreed to the proposal, promising to join them at the *fête*, and when the two players had departed, he returned to Lothario and Mignon, telling the latter that he intended to place her with some worthy people in the town, who would watch over her welfare.

But Mignon, already passionately devoted to her benefactor, whom she persisted in regarding as her master, implored him not to send her away from him; and she begged hard to be permitted to accompany him on his travels in the disguise of a page, that she might serve him wherever he went.

Wilhelm shook his head, gently removing her clinging hands from his arm, and the old harper now came forward and offered to be her guardian, declaring that if she would roam with him, he would watch over her with loving care.

Then Wilhelm, seeing the look of dis-

appointment and grief upon the sweet face of the gipsy girl, relented, and, touched by her devotion, he said that she might remain with him for the present, if she chose.

So when, some days later, the young student, after completing his preparations, set off for the Castle of Rosenberg, Mignon joyfully accompanied him in the garb of a page; and old Lothario, determined to keep a watch over the beautiful maiden whose appearance so strangely moved him, followed to the same neighbourhood, that he might be near at hand should harm befall her.

Upon arriving at the castle, Wilhelm quickly obtained admission to the suite of handsome apartments that had been allotted to the fair Filina, who, as the favourite "Star" of the theatrical company, was receiving every mark of attention and admiration from the Baron and his distinguished guests; and the charming actress greeted him with such evident pleasure that the young student, intoxicated by her subtle witcheries, was filled with delight.

The timid Mignon, after being received with coldness and laughing scorn by the actress, retired to a recess at the far end of the boudoir, and as she heard her beloved benefactor's protestations of admiration and regard for the gay pleasure-seeker before him, a dull, hopeless pain came into her heart, for she felt that she, the poor gipsy maid, could never hope to share in the sunshine of his love.

She wondered childishly whether she could

ever make herself sufficiently like Filina to attract him, and when the pretty actress presently departed to the salon with Wilhelm, she determined to try the experiment.

Finding herself alone in the room, she drew forth one of Filina's gorgeous robes, and arrayed herself in it; and then, sitting before the mirror, she began to enhance her delicate complexion with the various accessories to beauty used by the artful coquette, laughing with delight at her altered appearance.

Suddenly, however, she heard the sound of approaching footsteps, and fearing to be discovered in her borrowed finery, she sprang into an adjoining room, just as the intruder entered the boudoir.

The newcomer was a foppish youth, named Frederick, nephew to Baron Rosenberg, who, wishing to pose as an admirer of the fascinating Filina, had now come to pay his court, expecting to find her alone; but no sooner had he entered the room than he was followed by Wilhelm, who had returned to speak with Mignon, whom he was about to send back to the town at the request of Filina.

Recognising in Frederick a young gallant whom he had seen before in the town with the pretty actress, Wilhelm demanded to be told his business; and Frederick, knowing the handsome student to be his most formidable rival, instantly provoked a quarrel with him, and furiously drew his sword.

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Wilhelm, to humour the youth, who was little more than a boy, and whose attempted gallantry amused him, playfully drew his sword also; but at this moment, Mignon rushed from the inner chamber, and flung herself between them.

Quickly seeing that a duel had never been seriously intended—Fredrick having already sheathed his sword in evident relief—Mignon, suddenly remembering her borrowed plumes, began to make a shame-faced apology for her folly; but Wilhelm gently took her aside, and told her that they must now part, since he had quite decided to send her back to the town.

Filina, who had followed her admirer into the room, mockingly added that since the gipsy maid had taken a fancy to the dress she had adorned herself with, she might keep it; but Mignon, stung by the laughing scorn of her rival, and rendered desperate by Wilhelm's decision, furiously tore the gauzy robe to ribbons, and rushed away in a tempest of tears and angry feelings.

Wilhelm, astonished at this outburst of jealousy on the part of Mignon—whom until now he had regarded as a child—suddenly felt an awakened interest in her, and began to wonder at the depth of passion she had betrayed; but as the evening *fête* was now about to commence, he departed to witness the performance.

The play chosen for representation that night was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*;

and Filina, in the character of "Titania," won golden opinions from one and all. In her dainty fairy garments she bewitched the hearts of her audience by her charming acting and fascinating coquetry, and the old castle walls rang with the loud bursts of applause that were constantly accorded to the lovely actress.

Meanwhile poor Mignon, having passionately torn off her borrowed finery, and donned her own old gipsy garments once more, had flown from the castle, and made her way to the bank of a lonely lake in the grounds; and here, overcome by the grief of her hopeless love, and rendered frantic by the bursts of applause in praise of Filina that ever and anon reached her, she was just about to throw herself into the water, when she suddenly heard the sad, yet entrancing sounds of a harp played close at hand.

Turning round, she beheld Lothario the Harper, who had been hovering in the castle grounds all evening; and thus saved from her terrible resolve by his timely appearance, the unhappy girl calmed herself, and poured forth the whole story of her grief into the sympathising ears of the old man.

Leading her gently back to the illuminated grounds, Lothario soothed his companion as best he could, feeling strangely that her sorrows were his own; and when, carried away by her jealous emotions on hearing another loud burst of applause ring out upon the evening air, Mignon uttered a rash

wish that the building in which her rival now triumphed might suddenly burst into flames, a curious gleam came into the old harper's wild eyes, and he left her side at once.

In a few minutes he returned, and told her exultingly that, in accordance with her desire, he had set the castle on fire, and that the flames would soon burst forth; but before Mignon could fully grasp the meaning of what her half-witted friend had done to prove his zeal on her behalf, the festive entertainment came to an end, and guests and performers alike came out into the illuminated grounds to refresh themselves in the cool evening air.

The praises of Filina were being sung on every side, and as the triumphant actress came forth on the arm of Wilhelm, she was received with great enthusiasm. Wilhelm soon noticed Mignon standing in the gloom with Lothario, and hurrying forward, he greeted her with tenderness, for, alarmed at her prolonged absence, he had been searching for her. Filina, hating to see the two together, soon joined them, and desired Mignon to return to the theatre and fetch a bouquet she had left upon the stage; and Mignon, her despair brought back by the voice of Wilhelm, hurried into the doomed castle at once, remembering Lothario's words, and hoping to be overcome by the fumes within.

The interior of the castle was already burning fiercely, and as the startled guests

suddenly saw flames bursting out from the building they had just left, they rejoiced at their own safety.

But Mignon was within the burning castle, and quickly realizing her danger, Wilhelm, with a cry of horror, dashed through the smoking doorway to seek for her. Struggling against the fumes and suffocating heat, he made his way to the theatre, and finding Mignon lying half-dazed upon the already burning stage, he snatched her up in his arms, and, despite her frantic pleading that she might be left to her fate, bore her triumphantly through the blinding smoke into the safety of the grounds beyond.

Here he was quickly joined by Lothario, upon whom he saw that the recent excitement had had the effect of restoring his reason to its normal balance and clearness, for, to his surprise, the old harper presently announced in cool, decided tones his intention of conveying the unconscious girl to the palace of Cipriani in Italy, where he had influence to secure her every attention and care.

Seeing that Lothario was in earnest, and would not be diverted from his purpose, Wilhelm agreed to help the old man in conveying Mignon to Italy, for he now felt drawn to the beautiful young girl more closely than ever, and already his passing fancy for the frivolous coquette, Filina, was dying away.

So with every care and tenderness the

old man and his young companion bore the hapless Mignon to Italy, but upon arriving at the palace of Cipriani—a stately building upon the borders of a beautiful lake—the poor girl fell into a fever, brought on by the dangerous excitement and mental suffering she had lately endured.

Wilhelm found to his astonishment that the directions and commands of Lothario were all obeyed by the servants of the palace as though the old harper were their master, but he scarce found time even to wonder at this, for all his thoughts were now centred on the suffering Mignon. In her delirium, the poor girl constantly breathed his name, thus betraying her passionate love for him, and as Wilhelm gazed upon the sweet, pale face of the fair maiden he had rescued, and remembered her wonderful devotion and gratitude to him, an answering passion, deep and tender, gradually awakened within his own breast.

So one day, when at last Mignon had sufficiently recovered to be brought into a large, sunny room overlooking the sparkling lake, the young student told her of his love, and Mignon's faithful heart was filled with joy and sweet content.

Whilst the two lovers were rejoicing together, Lothario entered the room; but instead of his old familiar, way-worn garments, they saw, to their surprise, that he was now clothed in rich attire, and moved with the proud bearing of a noble. He greeted them

in courtly tones, and in answer to their astonished looks, he introduced himself as the owner of the palace in which they now resided, the Count of Cipriani, whose only child, Sperata, had been stolen from him many years ago.

He then told them that, half-crazed with grief at the loss of his child, he had wandered forth in the garb of a harper from city to city and country to country, in search of his darling; and for fifteen years he had never once given up the hope of finding her at last.

From the first time of seeing Mignon, he had felt unaccountably drawn to her, for her features had reminded him of his dead wife, and now, after having heard from Wilhelm the story she had told to him of her early recollections, he had come to prove that the gipsy girl was indeed his own long-lost child.

As he spoke, the Count produced a casket, and drew from it a girdle, which he said had been almost constantly worn by his little Sperata; and at the sound of this name, a chord of memory was struck in the heart of Mignon, and she eagerly drew forth another relic from the casket. This was a little prayer-book, from which the Count said his lost child had always spelled her evening prayer; and Mignon, in whose breast a stream of sweet recollections now rushed, closed her eyes, and repeated from memory, in soft, clear tones, the same simple childish prayer that was contained in the book.

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Satisfied at having thus proved beyond a doubt that the beautiful girl before him was indeed his own beloved daughter, Count Lothario clasped her in his arms with great joy; and then, placing her hand in that of Wilhelm, he bestowed his blessing upon them both.

The soft breezes and warm sunshine of her native land soon brought Mignon back to health once more, and then, restored to the arms of a devoted parent, and enraptured by the possession of Wilhelm's love, she quickly forgot her troubled past, and looked forward to a future of happiness and peace.

SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THE COMPOSERS

BALFE

MICHAEL WILLIAM BALFE was born at Dublin, 15th May 1808: died at Rowney Abbey, 20th October 1870. He displayed remarkable musical talent as a boy; and when only sixteen conducted the orchestra at Drury Lane Theatre. Later he studied music in Italy; and in 1845 he was made conductor of the Italian Opera, Covent Garden. He wrote a great many operas, the best known of which are:—*The Bohemian Girl* (1843), *The Rose of Castile* (1857), *Satanella* (1858), *The Maid of Honour* (1847), *Joan of Arc* (1837), etc.

GOUNOD

CHARLES FRANÇOIS GOUNOD was born at Paris, 17th June 1818: died there, 18th October 1893. He entered the Conservatoire in 1836, and took the Grand Prix de Rome in 1839. In Rome he was appointed Honorary Maestre di Capella for life. After several years of study, he produced his *Messe Solennelle in G*, some portions of which were brought out in London in 1851. He held

in Paris, from 1852-60, the post of conductor of the *Orphéon*. He wrote operas from 1851. *Faust* was produced at the Théâtre Lyrique in 1859, and placed him at once in the first rank of his profession. Amongst his other best known operas are:—*Romeo et Juliette* (1867), *Sapho* (1851), *Philémon et Baucis* (1860), *Cinq-Mars* (1877), etc. In 1882 he produced an oratorio, *The Redemption*, at the Birmingham Musical Festival; and he also wrote much church music.

AUBER

DANIEL FRANÇOIS ESPRIT AUBER was born at Caen, Normandy, 29th January 1782: died at Paris, 13th May 1871. He was the son of a Paris print-seller, and was sent in early youth to acquire knowledge of business in London; and whilst in England he devoted himself assiduously to the study of music. On returning to Paris he began to compose operas; and with *La Bergère Châtelaine* (1820), began a long and brilliant series of triumphs. His best known operas are:—*Fra Diavolo* (1830), *Les Diamants de la Couronne* (1841), *Haydée* (1847), *Manon Lescant* (1869), *Le Cheval de Bronze* (1835), etc.

WALLACE

WILLIAM VINCENT WALLACE was born at Waterford, Ireland, 1st July 1814: died at the Chateau of Bayen, in the Haute-Garonne, France, 12th October 1865. His father, a bandmaster, gave him his first instructions; and at an early age he

could play most military instruments, besides being very proficient on the violin. At the age of fifteen he became director of the Philharmonic Society in Dublin. In 1835 he set forth on a professional tour through Australia, New Zealand, India, South America, and the United States, meeting with enormous success as composer and performer. He was Director of Music at the Italian Theatre, Mexico, 1841-42. In 1845 *Maritana* was produced in London, and shares with Balfe's *Bohemian Girl* the highest popularity of any lyrical drama. Other well-known operas of Wallace's are:—*Lurline* (1860), *The Amber Witch* (1861), *Matilda of Hungary* (1847), *The Desert Flower* (1863), etc.

VERDI

GIUSEPPE VERDI was born at Rancola, in the Duchy of Parma, Italy, 10th October 1813: died in January 1901. He received his musical education at Bussets and Milan. He was appointed organist at Rancola at the age of ten years; and when but twenty years old he became director of the Philharmonic Society at Bussets. He settled in Milan in 1838, and there his first opera, *Oberto di San Bonifazio* was produced at La Scala in 1839. The opera that first brought him European fame was *Ernani* (1844). *Rigoletto* was produced in 1851, and *Il Trovatore* in 1853; and these two operas, through all changes of taste and style, still continue to hold their own in popular favour. He wrote many other operas, the best known of which are:—*La Traviata* (1853), *Aida* (1871), *Otello* (1887), *Macbeth* (1847), *Falstaff* (1893),

I Lombardi (1843), *Un ballo in Maschera* (1859), *Simon Boccanegra* (1857), *Les Vêpres Siciliennes* (1855), etc. His other works include *Requiem Mass* (1874), and other sacred compositions, etc.

BIZET

ALEXANDER CÉSAR LEOPOLD BIZET (known as Georges) was born at Paris on 25th October 1838: died 3rd June 1875. The son of a singing-master, he entered the Conservatoire at the age of nine years; and at the early age of nineteen gained the Grand Prix de Rome, and went to Italy to study. On returning to France, Bizet began to write operas, the first of which, *Pêcheurs de Perles* was produced at the Théâtre Lyrique in 1863. It was but coldly received, as was also *La Jolie Fille de Perth* (1867), *Djamileh*, and *L'Arlésienne*, in spite of their unusual merits. In 1875 *Carmen* was produced at the Opera Comique. This masterpiece quickly gained for Bizet world-wide fame, and placed him in the first rank of French composers. The Parisians, however, received the opera coldly; and it was not until eight years later, when it had been appraised everywhere else that they had at last recognised its extraordinary charm and genius. *Carmen* was the last work of Bizet; for, three months after its first production, just as success was within his grasp, the gifted composer was seized with sudden illness and died.

AMBROISE THOMAS

CHARLES AMBROISE THOMAS was born at Metz, 5th August 1811: died at Paris, 12th February

1896. Born of musical parents, he entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of seventeen, becoming director of that institute in 1871. In 1832 he won the Grand Prix de Rome; and whilst studying in Italy was very active as a composer. On his return from Rome he began to write operas, the first of which, *La Double Echelle*, produced at the Opera Comique in 1837, met with considerable success. Others followed; and with *Le Caid* (1849) and *Le Songe d'une Nuit d'été* (1850), his name was finally established, and gained him a high place amongst French composers. The operas that followed met with little success; but in *Mignon*, produced at the Opera Comique in 1866, the musical world recognised a masterpiece, and paid enthusiastic tribute to the genius of its composer. Other operas by Ambroise Thomas are:—*Hamlet* (1868), *Le Carnival de Venice* (1857), *Raymond* (1851), etc.

FLOTOW

FRIEDRICH VON FLOTOW was born at Teutendorf, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, 26th April 1812: died at Darmstadt, 23rd January 1883. He received his musical education at Paris, where he early began to write operas. His first real success was scored with *Stradella*, produced at Hamburg in 1844. *Martha* was produced in 1847, and quickly won the composer world-wide fame. It was produced in England at the Royal Italian Opera in 1858, and instantly obtained popularity with the English public. Flotow wrote several other operas, none of which are well known in England.

MEYERBEER

GIACOMO MEYERBEER was born at Berlin, 5th September 1791: died at Paris, 2nd May 1864. He was a pupil of Lauska, and also had lessons from Clementi. In 1815 he went to Italy to study musical composition, and there he began to write operas. He first took Rossini as his model, the best example of which was *Il Crociato* (1824). In 1831 he struck out in a new style with *Robert le Diable*, produced at the Grand Opera, Paris. This beautiful and fantastic opera was received with the wildest enthusiasm, and quickly brought fame to the composer. His masterpiece was *Les Huguenots* (1836) and his other best known works are:—*Le Prophète* (1849), *L'Etoile du Nord* (1854), *Dinorah* (1859), etc.

WAGNER

RICHARD WAGNER was born at Leipzig on 22nd May 1813: died at Venice, 13th February 1883. He was educated at Dresden and Leipzig, where he also studied music. Poetry was a passion with him as a boy; and verse and play writing occupied his mind until a great enthusiasm for Beethoven turned it into a musical direction. He was Musical Director at the Magdeburg Theatre from 1834-36, Conductor at Königsberg in 1836, Music Director at Riga in 1837-39, and lived in Paris in 1839-42, where he struggled in vain to obtain a footing. His opera *Rienzi* was produced at Dresden in 1842 with a success which obtained for him the post of Kapellmeister at the opera

house there, *The Flying Dutchman* was produced the following year at Dresden, and marked a new epoch in his artistic history. *Tannhäuser*, the first of his creations from the German myth-world, was also produced at Dresden in 1845. After this he got into pecuniary difficulties; and his sympathies also being with the revolutionary movement of 1849, he was proscribed, and escaped to Paris. By the efforts of Liszt *Lohengrin* was produced in 1850 at Weimar. After ten years of exile, Wagner was pardoned, and took up his residence at Munich, where King Ludwig of Bavaria became his enthusiastic and generous patron. *Tristan and Isolde* was produced at Munich in 1865; and this genuine music-drama marked a new epoch in operatic art. *Die Meistersinger* followed in 1868. Wagner was now world-famous, and his colossal genius began to receive the support it deserved. In 1872 his own great theatre at Bayreuth was founded; and upon its completion in 1876, his noble Tetralogy, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* was produced there. His last dramatic effort and crowning achievement, *Parsifal*, was produced at Bayreuth in 1882. Wagner's early years were full of struggle, opposition, and strife; but through all his disappointments he clung firmly to the new and great ideals of art he had formed, and in the end he conquered, his latter years being crowned with success and enthusiastic appreciation.

MOZART

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART was born at Salzburg, Austria, on 27th January 1756: died at Vienna, 5th December 1791. He showed a precocious knowledge of music when but three

or four years of age, and composed before he was six. His father, a musician also, guided his efforts; and from 1762-65 took the child to many European cities to exhibit his talents. In 1718 Mozart was made Concert-Meister at Salzburg; and here his first opera, *La Finta Semplice*, was produced, written when about twelve years old. In 1777 he went to Paris and other places, failing to obtain anything but empty applause; and in 1779 he returned to Salzburg as Cathedral organist. From 1781 he lived in Vienna, where he remained until his death. He reaped but little pecuniary benefit from his compositions, in spite of his great genius; and he was seldom free from the anxieties of poverty. In 1791 he received the famous commission from a mysterious stranger to write a *Requiem Mass*; and in enfeebled health he began it, declaring that it was for his own funeral. This was his last great work, and he died ere it was quite finished. There were no ceremonies at his grave, and he was buried in the common ground of St Marx. Many years later a monument was erected to him by the city of Vienna. As an operatic writer, Mozart is considered by many to have no equal. His chief operas are:—*Le Nozze di Figaro* (1786), *Don Giovanni* (1787), *Idomeneo* (1781), *Die Zauberflöte* (1791), *La Chemenza di Lito* (1791), *Cose fan tutte* (1790), etc. Besides the exquisite *Requiem*, he wrote many other Masses, and a great number of symphonies, sonatas, concertos, quartettes, etc. Very little of his music was published in his lifetime.



